Use of County Communications Systems

Effective: February 21, 2001, Adopted by Resolution No. 22
01-18

Objective: This policy provides guidance and defines responsibilities to staff, management, and the Information Technology Service (ITS) Department regarding the use and administration of County communications systems including telecommunications equipment (telephones, cellular phones, facsimile machines, pagers), electronic mail (e-mail) including County-wide distribution lists, and Internet access.

Reference: Public Access to Records, 01-06; Information Technology Services Department; Personnel Department; County Administration

Policy and Procedures:

1. Communication systems used by County employees are provided to support legitimate County government functions and their use shall be consistent with the County's business interests. E-mail and voice mail messages residing or originating on County communications systems are not personal and private.

2. ITS has the technical capabilities to monitor and access the content and use of County communication systems. ITS does not routinely monitor individual employee's use and content of County communications systems unless authorized to do so under the terms and conditions set forth in this policy. (refer to paragraphs 5 and 6)

3. Employees may use County communications systems to communicate informally with others so long as the communication is not for illegal, disruptive, unethical or unprofessional activities, personal financial gain, or any purpose that would jeopardize the interests of the County. It is the responsibility of Department Heads and/or Supervisors to provide additional minimum standards for the use of communication systems for informal and personal uses.

4. Communication systems security is a joint responsibility of ITS, staff with IT responsibilities within other County departments, and employees. Employees must take all reasonable precautions, including safeguarding and changing passwords, to prevent the use of their account(s) by unauthorized individuals. Unless authorized under this policy, any employee is prohibited from accessing another employee's e-mail or voice mail account without first gaining his or her permission.

5. ITS may access individual employee communication system accounts to diagnose and resolve technical problems, or for a legitimate business purpose when requested by a Department Head, or his or her designee (e.g., the need to access information when an employee is absent and/or unreachable for an extended period of time).

6. Any Department Head, or his or her designee, may authorize ITS, through use of a standardized form, to access and/or monitor an employee's e-mail account, voice mail account, and/or Internet use activities. The Department initiating the request shall be responsible for documenting such activities. Upon completion of the review or investigation, employees will be provided with written notification by their Department Head, or his or her designee, that access to their e-mail account, voice mail account, and/or the monitoring of the employee's Internet activities has occurred.

Telecommunications Equipment

7. All requests to change the location of a telephone or facsimile machine, to add a new telephone or facsimile machine, or to change any telecommunications equipment features must be submitted to ITS.

8. Each Department not on a call detail recording system shall keep a log of long distance calls placed from County telephones as a means of auditing costs and unauthorized use.

9. Personal long distance, toll based telephone calls originating from any County telecommunication equipment are prohibited unless approved by the Department Head, or employee's Supervisor. Employees are required to reimburse the County for all personal long distance, toll based telephone calls directly charged to the County. When making a personal long distance call, the employee should make the call collect, by calling card, or by other means that charges the call to someone other than the County.

10. Employees should refrain from using hand-held cellular telephones while operating licensed moving vehicles while on County time, or any time during the operation of a County owned vehicle, excluding County emergency personnel.

Electronic Mail

11. Employees should remove all non-critical e-mail communications and attached files in a timely fashion. ITS is authorized to establish e-mail retention guidelines and standards, including the option of removing files retained in an e-mail system provided a prior acknowledgement of this action is received by ITS from the employee, or in the employee's absence or inability to deal with this, from the employee’s Supervisor.

Internet Access

12. ITS is authorized to establish and to monitor compliance with Internet use guidelines and standards for the purpose of maintaining network bandwidth, network system performance, and network security functions.

13. Internet security is a joint responsibility of ITS, staff with IT responsibilities within other County departments, and employee communication system users. Employees must take all reasonable precautions, including the appropriate use of standardized anti-virus software.