

CITY OF NORTON SHORES

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Electronic Communications Policy is to appropriately manage and insure efficient use of the City's computer communications resources.

OWNERSHIP OF EQUIPMENT AND MESSAGES

All computer equipment is owned by the City of Norton Shores and shall be used primarily for conducting City business.

All data and other electronic messages within the computer system are the property of the City of Norton Shores. E-mail messages either composed or received on this system may be considered City records, depending on their content, and therefore may be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests and other legal disclosure.

USE OF SYSTEM

Computer communications equipment shall be used primarily for conducting City business. Any personal use shall be limited to nonwork hours (i.e. morning and afternoon breaks, lunch hour or after scheduled work hours). Further, the following activities are prohibited: uploading or downloading of confidential or proprietary materials, gaining unauthorized access to remote computers or other systems, accessing or obtaining pornographic or offensive materials, or engaging in gambling.

RESTRICTIONS ON CONTENT

Use of City computers to create or transmit harassing or defamatory materials or materials that are sexually explicit is prohibited. Further, the following activities are prohibited: creation or distribution of chain letters, solicitations or advertisements for non-City purposes and searching for other employment. Employees should only disclose information or messages from the e-mail system to authorized employees.

EMPLOYERS RIGHT TO MONITOR

The City of Norton Shores reserves the right to monitor any and all employee use of City computer systems. This right is reserved to ensure that computer systems are generally being used for business purposes only, to insure that the City's policies on harassment are being followed and to access information in an employee's e-mail system when that employee is unavailable. Employees do not have a personal privacy right in any personal or work related messages created, received, stored and/or sent using the City's computer systems.

MAJOR POINTS REGARDING E-MAIL

It is possible that e-mail sent from the City's system can be intercepted on the local system and on the Internet, therefore the user should not expect any degree of privacy regarding e-mail messages. E-mail messages deleted by the user may be retrievable from the hard drive, backup tapes or the receiving or sending e-mail system.

Electronic mail is an important resource for communications and is an essential element in the City's daily activities. Aside from increased speed and accessibility, electronic mail allows a certain amount of flexibility not experienced through memos or other traditional methods of communication. Because of this, we need to acknowledge the following key points:

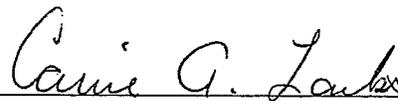
- Messages can be forwarded and copied very easily. It only takes a few keystrokes for a personal, and perhaps embarrassing, message to be sent to the wrong people. Good advice is not to send messages that could be damaging if made public or that cover sensitive material.
- Know your recipient. Different people have different ideas of what is acceptable. Find out and respect each person's wishes. Be respectful and exercise good taste. An e-mail account is not a license to abuse or insult people.
- Be considerate of the recipient's time. E-mail messages work best if they're short and to the point.
- Don't send copies of e-mail to people unless they need to be copied. In addition to cluttering up their mailboxes, it can place them in an awkward position, making them feel as if they have to do something with the information.
- Unsolicited advertising is not acceptable. The selling of personal services or products toward personal financial gain is prohibited.

- Be aware that e-mail can be archived and, under certain circumstances, may not be secure. Many on-line services and public e-mail providers protect the confidentiality of their subscribers' e-mail, but some companies consider e-mail subject to scrutiny.
- Don't "cry wolf." Avoid "Urgent" or "Priority" unless it really is. Employ capital letters sparingly. Using them for an entire message is perceived by many as SHOUTING, and is harder to read.
- In face-to-face conversation, we convey emotion and meaning through facial expressions and vocal inflections. That element of speech is absent in e-mail, so take care when expressing yourself, especially with the use of irony or humor.
- Avoid sarcasm, unless you're sure it will work, and think very carefully before using e-mail to express anger. With e-mail, once it's sent, it's gone. If you're posting a message in a public forum, remember it can be read by a wide variety of people.
- E-mail at work is a privilege, not a right. The City of Norton Shores is entrusted with a valuable communication tool that holds endless possibilities. If you receive an e-mail message that is harassing or inappropriate, please report it to your supervisor, or any department head.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATING POLICY

Violations of the City of Norton Shores Electronic Communications Policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Also, employees should be aware that they may be held personally responsible for their actions on the Internet.

This policy is effective May 1, 2002. Any questions regarding the policy should be directed to the Personnel Officer.



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