



EFFINGHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Human Resources Standards of Practice

+Standards of Practice: Section 2.16	Issue Date 4/20/2021 New ____ Revised <u>X</u> Supersedes Policy Dated:
Title: E-Mail, Internet and Computer Use	Approved By Effingham County Board of Commissioners

2.16 - E-MAIL, INTERNET & COMPUTER USE

A. STANDARD

The County regards computers, the Internet, Intranet, and electronic mail as valuable tools to assist employees in their professional and work activities. The County expects and requires that its employees will utilize computers, the Internet, Intranet, and electronic mail primarily for authorized County purposes and business. The County intends to honor these policies as set forth below, but must reserve the right to change them at any time without notice, as may be required under the circumstances.

B. GUIDELINES

1. Computer hardware is the property of Effingham County and is not to be removed. Computer hardware is not to be altered except by or at the direction and under the supervision of the Director of Information Technology/County Manager, or their designated representative. No employee should attempt the repair of any computer hardware except at the direction and under the supervision of the Director of Information Technology/County Manager, or their designated representative.

2. The County maintains an electronic mail system. The system is provided by the County to assist in the conduct of business within and for the purposes of the County. All electronic communications belong to and are the property of the County.

3. The electronic mail system hardware is County property and, therefore, public property. Additionally, all messages composed, sent, or received on the electronic mail system are, and remain, the property of the County, which is a public agency. They are not the private property of any employee. The County reserves the right to inspect all e-mail files and other storage of electronic data.

4. The electronic mail system is to be used primarily for County business.



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5. The electronic mail system may not be used to solicit money or support for commercial ventures, religious or political causes.

6. The electronic mail system is not to be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages. Among those which are considered offensive, are any messages which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comment that offensively addresses someone's age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.

7. The electronic mail system shall not be used to send (upload) or receive (download) copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary information, or similar materials without prior authorization from the County Manager.

8. Effingham County Board of Commissioners computers and any data stored in them are the property of the Effingham County Board of Commissioners and may be accessed at any time by the Effingham County Board of Commissioners and/or the County Manager. Employees shall not expect privacy in the use of Effingham County Board of Commissioners computer and computer networks. Effingham County Board of Commissioners, and/or the County Manager, may, without notice, monitor Internet usage and/or email and review computer files to ensure that computers or computer networks are not being used for impermissible purposes. The County reserves and intends to exercise the right to review, audit, intercept, access and disclose all messages created, received, or sent over the electronic mail system for any purpose. The contents of electronic mail properly obtained for legitimate business purposes, may be disclosed within the County without permission of the employee.

9. Notwithstanding the County's right to retrieve and read any electronic mail or messages, such messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read any e-mail messages that are not sent to them. Should a Department Head deem it necessary to access an employee's emails, approval for this action must be authorized by the County Manager. Department Heads must complete HR Form 64, Request to View Email and Internet Activity and forward it to the County Manager for approval. The County Manager will forward the



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completed form to the Human Resources Office. The Human Resources Office will notify the requesting Department Head whether the request has been approved or disapproved. Human Resources will also notify IT if the request has been approved.

10. Any employee who discovers a violation of this policy shall notify the /County Manager.

11. Any employee who violates this policy or uses the electronic mail system for improper purposes shall be subject to discipline up to and including discharge.

12. Downloading files from the Internet or otherwise placing files from non-County sources on the computer is common and is necessary to conduct the business of the County. Extreme care should be taken, however, to avoid problems with such activities as they might interfere with County operations.

a. Non-County programs may interfere with the operation of County-owned programs and may cause computers not to operate or to operate in a diminished capacity. Restoration of full functionality may require considerable time and expense, and will interfere with meeting deadlines for projects. No non-County programs should be loaded on County computers without authorization of the Director of Information Technology/County Manager, or their designated representative. Furthermore, loading non-County programs may violate software license agreements and expose the County to unnecessary costs and liability to software manufacturers.

b. Software and/or data may be "infected" with viruses that cause individual computers to malfunction. It is the responsibility of each employee to make sure a virus protection program is running and to download needed information only from reliable sources.

13. Use of the Internet is intended for County business purposes. All information residing on the Intranet is proprietary, confidential, and for internal use only. Use of the Internet and e-mail access is a privilege that may be revoked by the County with or without cause.



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14. It is the policy of the County that no entertainment or non-business-related games, etc., be allowed on the software of County computers. It is the Department Head's responsibility to clear any such software from their department's computers and ensure that when new software/operating systems are installed, entertainment and non-business-related games are removed.

15. Employees may copy, upload, or transmit County-owned data and software to the Internet, a personally owned computer, or to a third party only with the approval of the County Manager,. If there is a need to copy, upload or transmit County owned data the employee must notify their Department Head who in turn will contact the County Manager for approval/disapproval prior to the release of information.

Should a Department Head deem it necessary to access an employee's Internet history, approval for this action must be authorized by the County Manager. Department Heads must complete HR Form 64, Request to View Email and Internet Activity and forward it to the County Manager for approval. The County Manager will forward the completed form to the Human Resources Office. The Human Resources Office will notify the requesting Department Head whether the request has been approved or disapproved. Human Resources will also notify IT if the request has been approved.

16. Many emails and other electronic files constitute public records for the purposes of state record retention laws. As such, whether a given email or electronic file is subject to a retention schedule must be determined by its content rather than its format. As a general rule, any email or other electronic file which is a substitute for a letter, memorandum, notice, report or other traditional record that would be subject to a particular retention schedule, then it too is subject to the schedule. Conversely, if the email or other electronic file is merely transitory, it need not be retained beyond its useful life (e.g., listserv messages, meeting notices, general staff announcements, invitations to events, etc.). Users of the Effingham County Board of Commissioners computers and other computer related services must also bear in mind that all emails and other electronic files are generally subject to disclosure under the Open Records Act.



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17. Excessive Internet use for entertainment, personal shopping, or non-County business may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

18. The following constitute unacceptable uses of the Internet, Intranet and email made available to employees by the Effingham County Board of Commissioners and may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

- a. Visiting inappropriate websites (erotica, hate groups, etc.).
- b. Unauthorized attempts to access any computer or network.
- c. Sending or posting threatening or otherwise inappropriate messages.
- d. Sending or posting racially and/or sexually harassing messages or images, sending or posting any sexually suggestive or explicit messages, or any other use that violates the Effingham County Board of Commissioners policies regarding workplace harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation.
- e. Accessing or copying confidential and/or proprietary software, programs, or other electronic files without permission.
- f. Sending or posting confidential information without authorization.
- g. Downloading, uploading or sending viruses or other malicious files or programs.
- h. Opening or sending emails to other electronic files that may endanger Effingham County Board of Commissioners computers and/or network.
- i. Using the Internet and/or email for any purpose which violates a federal, state or local law.



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j. Using the Internet and/or email for any private business or other for-profit activities unrelated to the user's duties and responsibilities as an employee of the Effingham County Board of Commissioners.

k. Accessing, downloading or sending computer games that have no bearing on the user's duties and responsibilities as an employee of the Effingham County Board of Commissioners, recognizing that some games designed to teach, illustrate, train or simulate agency related issues may be acceptable.

l. Accessing, copying, or modifying electronic files stored within the Effingham County Board of Commissioners computers outside of the user's duties and responsibilities as an employee of the Effingham County Board of Commissioners without authorization.

m. Disclosing or exchanging passwords or seeking or obtaining passwords of other employees or authorized users of Effingham County Board of Commissioners computers and computer related services.

n. Representing oneself as another user, either on the Effingham County Board of Commissioners Intranet or elsewhere on the Internet, without authorization.

o. Intentionally developing programs designed to harass other users or infiltrate a computer or computing system and/or damage or alter the software components of same.

p. Fundraising or public relations activities not specifically related to the user's duties and responsibilities or to the Effingham County Board of Commissioners approved activities.

19 Department Heads, or their designees, are responsible for their employee's compliance with the provisions of this Policy and for promptly investigating non-compliance. Suspension of service to user may occur when deemed necessary to maintain the operation and integrity of Effingham County Board of Commissioners network. User account and passwords may be withdrawn without notice if a user



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violates the acceptable use policy. Disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment may be imposed depending on the severity of the violation. Criminal or civil action against users may be initiated when laws are violated.

20. Any software obtained from outside sources shall be scanned by the Information Technology Department prior to use for viruses and other malicious files or programs.

21. Contractors and other non-County users may be granted access to the Effingham County Board of Commissioners provided internet and/or email services at the discretion of the County Manager. Acceptable use by such users is the responsibility of the contract administrator, who is expected to provide such users with this policy.

22. Use passwords associated with the County information system only on that system. When setting up an account at a different information system that will be accessed using the Internet, choose password that is different from ones used on County information systems. Do not use the same password for both local and remote internet accessed systems. If the password used at the remote internet accessed site were to be compromised, the different password used locally would still be secure. Passwords should not be so obvious so that others could easily guess them, and passwords should be changed at least every sixty days.

23. Always make a reasonable attempt to complete the logoff or other termination procedure when finished using a remote, internet accessed system or similar resource. This will help prevent potential breaches of security.

24. Always remain mindful that unencrypted email sent or received outside any department and on the internet cannot be expected to be secure.

25. The internet connection is a shared resource. While routine email and file transfer activities generally will not impact other users, large file transfers and intensive multimedia activities will impact the service levels of other users. Users contemplating file transfers of over ten megabytes per transfer or interactive video activities shall, to



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be considerate of other user, schedule these activities early or late in the day or, if possible after business hours.

26. Know and follow general accepted internet and email etiquette. Refrain from language or other uses of the internet and email that reflect poorly on the County.

27. Any email or other correspondence sent to the County Attorney or other legal counsel for the County, if sent for the purpose of assisting legal counsel in providing legal advice to the County, must include the following disclaimer:

"This communication and all attachments may contain privileged and confidential legal communications/attorney work product intended solely for the use of the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient, any reading, distribution, copying or other use of this communications or any attachments hereto is prohibited and you should delete this message from all locations, and advise the sender. Thank you."

28. In compliance with federal copyright laws, the Effingham County Board of Commissioners will not participate in or condone the illegal duplication of licensed microcomputer software. Such activity is strictly prohibited on County premises and/or computers. The County does not own the copyright to any software or its related documentation and, unless authorized by the software developer, does not have the right to reproduce it for use on more than one computer. With regard to use on local area networks or on multiple machines, County employees and other authorized users shall use the software only in accordance with the license agreement.

29. County employees are required to promptly report any misuse of software or related documentation to their Department Head.