

POLICY TITLE: ~~Internet Use~~ Electronic Communications

POLICY NUMBER: HAWC-15

ADOPTION DATE: December 10, 1998

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1999

REVISED: June 14, 2007

I. PURPOSE

- A. ~~Various forms of electronic communication and a~~ Access to the Internet ~~is~~ are becoming increasingly necessary for Housing Authority of Washington County employees to provide superior customer service. The efficient utilization of ~~the Internet for~~ electronic communications and research can improve the quality, productivity, and general cost effectiveness of the Authority's work force. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of ~~thi~~ these resources.

II. GENERAL POLICY

- A. It is the general policy of the Housing Authority of Washington County that Internet access be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical, and legal manner in accordance with the mission of the Authority. Users must acknowledge their understanding of the general policy and guidelines as a condition of receiving an Internet access account. All material downloaded to Authority equipment becomes the property of the Authority subject to the rights of third parties in the material. Any such material shall be subject to inspection without prior notice for the purpose of enforcing laws, regulations and Authority policies and protecting the Authority from civil liability.
- B. ~~The Authority encourages the use of voice/email as any other work tool available to employees. Users will not engage in any activities via voice/email that will in any way discredit the Authority. The Authority reserves the right to retrieve any message.~~
- C. ~~The Authority will provide copies of legally acquired software to meet all legitimate business needs in sufficient quantities. The use of software obtained from any other source could present security and legal threats to the Authority, and such use is strictly prohibited unless approved in writing by the Executive Director after proper review of licencing language.~~

- D. The Authority is a user of an array of electronic communication tools and equipment including, but not limited to, telephones, email services, voice-mail systems, fax machines, modems, servers, computers, Intranet equipment, and network tools such as browsers and Internet access facilities. These electronic systems are owned and maintained by the Authority, and as a general rule, are to be used for business purposes only.

All information contained in and communicated through these electronic systems, regardless of by, or to whom sent or received, or however stored or filed, is owned by the Authority. The Authority reserves the absolute right, in its discretion, to monitor, access, and disclose all information accessed by, contained in or communicated through these electronic systems. Employees enjoy no expectation of privacy with respect to their use of the Authority's electronic systems. As a part of the maintenance of these systems, or otherwise, the Authority reserves the absolute right to dispose of any information contained within these electronic systems.<sup>1</sup>

- E. Failure to adhere to this policy and the guidelines below may result in suspension or revocation of the privilege of ~~Internet~~ access to these electronic systems and may subject the employee to administrative, disciplinary or legal penalties.

### III. GUIDELINES

- A. Acceptable uses of the Internet are activities which support reference, research and taxpayer service. Authority employees are encouraged to develop uses which meet the needs of their job and which take advantage of the Internet, including without limitation electronic mail, conferences, news, bulletin boards, and data bases.

- B. ~~Unacceptable uses of the Internet~~ Authority provided electronic communications systems include but are not limited to:

1. Violation of laws or Authority policy relating to privacy;
2. Using profanity or obscenity which may be offensive to another user;
3. Sending or receiving material which would violate the Authority policy against harassment;
4. Copying or distributing commercial software in violation of copyright law;

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraphs II. B-D added 6/14/2007

5. Using the Internet or other electronic systems for financial gain or for any private, commercial or illegal activity; and
6. Using the Internet in such a manner as to create a security breach through the introduction of computer "viruses" or through the provision of information which might permit unauthorized access to the system. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt system performance or to disable precautions against the spread of viruses or other destructive software will be viewed as criminal activity under applicable local, state and federal laws.

C. ~~Employees assigned an Internet account are responsible for learning proper techniques and standards for participation and for understanding that if they misuse the Internet, they will lose their accounts and may incur administrative, disciplinary or legal penalties. Particular concerns include without limitation issues of privacy, copyright infringement, harassment and computer viruses.~~ Each employee of the Authority is responsible for maintaining the security of the electronic systems, the integrity of all databases, and the confidentiality of information relating to Authority business. Each employee is responsible for the proper use of the electronic systems and the contents of communications recorded in the electronic systems. Employees are also obligated to inform their supervisor upon discovering foreign matters or security breaches. Employees should bear in mind that the ease and convenience afforded by electronic systems as a means of communication, either with one person or entity, or a group, does not reduce one's obligations or change the Authority's expectation of professionalism and courtesy to others in all communications.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wording of this paragraph changed 6/14/2007