



Policy 27

Internet & Electronic Mail Use



Policy 27 – Internet & Electronic Mail Use

ADOPTION DATE: February 7, 2014

BACKGROUND and PURPOSE

Purpose

The internet provides a source of information that can benefit the Utility and those who carry out the mission of the Utility. E-Mail is a means of communication which benefits the Utility and those who carry out the mission of the Utility. It is the policy of the Utility that those whose job performance can be enhanced through use of the Internet be provided access and become proficient in its capabilities. This Policy document delineates acceptable use of the Internet and e-mail communications by Utility employees, volunteers, commissioners and contractors while using Utility-owned or leased equipment, facilities, telephones, Internet addresses, Internet service, or domain names registered to the Utility.

Background

The Internet is comprised of thousands of interconnected networks which provide digital pathways to millions of information sites. Because these networks subscribe to a common set of standards and protocols, users have worldwide access to Internet hosts and their associated applications and databases. Electronic search and retrieval tools permit users to gather information and data from a multitude of sources and to communicate with other internet users who have related interests.

Access to the Internet provides the Utility with the opportunity to locate and use current and historical data from multiple sources worldwide. Those authorized to use the Utility's Internet/E-mail system are encouraged to develop the skills necessary to effectively utilize these tools in the performance of their jobs.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to internet and electronic mail use and access of the Utility's Internet/E-mail system. The following Utility Internet/E-mail users are covered under this policy.

1. Utility's Governing Board
2. Full or part-time employees of the Utility.
3. Individuals authorized to use Utility resources to access the Internet.

Policy Statement

INTERNET/EMAIL ACCESS

All employees, commissioners and other users authorized by the Utility to have internet access and e-mail privileges for Utility work and other authorized activities must use the internet and e-mail system in full compliance with this policy. *Each user must be aware of the risks related to Internet access and e-mail which risks cannot be eliminated but may only be managed through the exercise of prudence and caution.*

Before any person may use the Utility's Internet/E-Mail system, such person must be individually authorized to use the Utility's system before doing so and must sign the Utility's "Internet/E-Mail Use Form".

Authorized users may use the Utility's Internet/E-Mail system, for infrequent and brief personal use during a meal, other personal break time, and after working hours. In no event shall any such limited personal use include any activity otherwise prohibited by the Policy.

Users of the Utility's Internet/E-Mail shall have no expectation of privacy as to any e-mail message or Internet use. Internet use and e-mail messages sent or received on the Utility's computers are not personal or private, and each is the property of the Utility. The Utility reserves the right to monitor e-mail and Internet use on its Internet/E-mail system at any time.

Public Record

Electronic mail, whether sent via the internet or internally, may be a public record subject to public disclosure under the Tennessee Public Records Law and may be subject to inspection and copying by the public (TCA 10-7-512).

INTERNET USE

Acceptable Use

Persons authorized to use the Internet under this Policy are representing the Utility. Therefore, only ethical and legal uses of the Internet shall be considered acceptable uses. Examples of acceptable uses are:

- Accessing useful business information beneficial to the Utility
- Utilizing online learning from authorized sources.
- Access use for incidental person matters during “Personal Time” to retrieve non-job related text and graphics information and does not conflict with “Unacceptable Uses”

Unacceptable Use

Persons authorized to use the Internet under this Policy shall not use the Internet for illegal or unethical purposes which uses shall be considered unacceptable uses. Examples of unacceptable uses are:

- Accessing chat rooms.
- Posting confidential information in newsgroups.
- Downloading of music.
- Purchasing of personal items.
- Accessing personal email accounts (web mail: i.e.hotmail.com, ect.)
- Participating in online auctions
- Downloading files of unknown content or origin.
- Transmitting copyrighted materials without authorization.
- Modifying files or data belonging to other users without explicit permission to do so.
- Accessing any web site or content that contains defamatory, false, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, pornographic, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, or otherwise biased, discriminatory, or illegal material, whether in the form of a “joke” or otherwise.

E-MAIL USE

The Utility will assign an e-mail account to each employee authorized to use the Utility's Internet/E-Mail system as the Utility deems necessary and appropriate. All communications and information transmitted by, received from and stored in the Utility's Internet/E-Mail system are the Utility's sole property. The Utility reserves the right to inspect (view), print, delete, copy, forward, or perform any other action deemed necessary by the Utility in relation to all communications noted above unless prohibited by federal or state law.

The following guidelines have been established for E-Mail use:

- Personnel may not send messages that are harassing, intimidating, offensive, obscene, or discriminatory toward anyone.
- Unknown e-mails should not be opened as they may contain file attachments which are common sources of computer viruses, worms, and Trojan horses. Even if you know who the e-mail is from, do not open any unknown file attachments with .vbs, .exe, .sys, or .com filename extensions
- Should an employee receive, via e-mail, inappropriate material such as messages containing harassing, intimidating, offensive, obscene, or discriminatory content from any source, the employee is obligated to delete it immediately. Forwarding of such material is strictly prohibited.
- Even though an employee has been given a password to limit access to the e-mail system, the Utility expects employees to use e-mail for personal purposes on a limited basis. All employees are forbidden to access someone else's e-mails; however, the Utility or its authorized representative has a right to access any employee's e-mail at any time for any reason without prior notice when not prohibited by federal or state law. Employees should have no expectation of privacy or confidentiality in the Utility's e-mail or voice mail system used at work.
- Employees are prohibited from using the Utility's e-mail or voice mail system to transmit any of the Utility's information that is confidential or privileged without prior permission of the Utility's General Manager or to transmit customer information outside the Utility without prior permission from the customer or his or her authorized representative.
- Creation or forwarding of chain e-mails, regardless of content, is strictly prohibited.
- All messages on the Utility's E-mail system are records of the Utility which the Utility reserves the right to read or disclose for any reason at any time when not prohibited by federal or state law.

Failure to abide by any of the provisions of this policy, in whole or in part, may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination without prior warning or notice.