

CENTRAL VIRGINIA PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

COMPUTER USE POLICY

SECTION ONE.

PURPOSE

A. To remain competitive, better serve our customers and provide our employees with the best tools to do their jobs, the Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPCD or Commission) makes available to our workforce access to one or more forms of electronic media and services, including computers, e-mail, telephones, voicemail, fax machines, external electronic bulletin boards, wire services, online services, intranet, Internet and the World Wide Web.

B. The Commission encourages the use of these media and associated services because they can make communication more efficient and effective and because they are valuable sources of information about vendors, customers, technology, and new products and services. However, all employees and everyone connected with the organization should remember that electronic media and services provided by the company are company property and their purpose is to facilitate and support company business. All computer users have the responsibility to use these resources in a professional, ethical, and lawful manner.

C. To ensure that all employees are responsible, the following guidelines have been established for using e-mail and the Internet. No policy can lay down rules to cover every possible situation. Instead, it is designed to express the Commission's philosophy and set forth general principles when using electronic media and services.

D. Employees should also read Chapter Seven, "Employee Expectations," of the Employee Handbook, Section B entitled "Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy."

SECTION TWO.

PROHIBITED COMMUNICATIONS

Electronic media cannot be used for knowingly transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communication that is:

1. Discriminatory or harassing;
2. Derogatory to any individual or group;
3. Obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
4. Defamatory or threatening;

5. In violation of any license governing the use of software; or
6. Engaged in for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the Commission policy or business interests.

SECTION THREE.

PERSONAL USE

The computers, electronic media and services provided by the Commission are primarily for business use to assist employees in the performance of their jobs. Limited, occasional, or incidental use of electronic media (sending or receiving) for personal, nonbusiness purposes is understandable and acceptable, and all such use should be done in a manner that does not negatively affect the systems' use for their business purposes. However, employees are expected to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and not abuse this privilege.

SECTION FOUR.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Generally, electronic information created and/or communicated by an employee using e-mail, word processing, utility programs, spreadsheets, voicemail, telephones, Internet and bulletin board system access, and similar electronic media is not reviewed by the company. However, the following conditions should be noted:

The Commission does routinely gather logs for most electronic activities or monitor employee communications directly, e.g., telephone numbers dialed, sites accessed, call length, and time at which calls are made, for the following purposes:

1. Cost analysis;
2. Resource allocation;
3. Optimum technical management of information resources; and
4. Detecting patterns of use that indicate employees are violating company policies or engaging in illegal activity.

B. The Commission reserves the right, at its discretion, to review any employee's electronic files and messages to the extent necessary to ensure electronic media and services are being used in compliance with the law, this policy and other company policies.

C. Employees should not assume electronic communications are completely private. Accordingly, if they have sensitive information to transmit, they should use other means.

D. Information contained in an e-mail should be retained and disposed of the same as a paper record in accordance with the Virginia Public Records Act. For these records, the user may wish to make a hard copy of the e-mail to be filed. Other e-mail, not considered a public record, may be deleted. (refer to Chapter 3, Employment, Section M. Recordkeeping, of the Commission Employee Handbook) Unless the e-mail is specifically exempted, it must be produced if requested under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Departments/Staff are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and the record keeping requirements related to their job function. If subpoenaed, e-mail records must be produced.

SECTION FIVE.

SOFTWARE

To prevent computer viruses from being transmitted through the company's computer system, unauthorized downloading of any unauthorized software is strictly prohibited. Only software approved by the Commission may be downloaded. Employees should contact the Executive Director if they have any questions.

SECTION SIX.

SECURITY/APPROPRIATE USE

A. Employees must respect the confidentiality of other individuals' electronic communications. Except in cases in which explicit authorization has been granted by company management, employees are prohibited from engaging in, or attempting to engage in:

1. Monitoring or intercepting the files or electronic communications of other employees or third parties;
2. Hacking or obtaining access to systems or accounts they are not authorized to use;
3. Using other people's log-ins or passwords; and
4. Breaching, testing, or monitoring computer or network security measures.
5. Unreasonable internet use that is not related to work.

B. No e-mail or other electronic communications can be sent that attempt to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else.

C. Electronic media and services should not be used in a manner that is likely to cause network congestion or significantly hamper the ability of other people to access and use the system.

D. Anyone obtaining electronic access to other companies' or individuals' materials must respect all copyrights and cannot copy, retrieve, modify or forward copyrighted materials except as permitted by the copyright owner.

E. An employee who abuses the network system, internet, or computer equipment or uses it inappropriately or illegally is subject to discipline, which could include but not be limited to, revocation of network privileges or termination; and/or civil or criminal prosecution if such is deemed appropriate. The Commission reserves the right to monitor usage and copy and examine files maintained on the Commission resources.

SECTION SEVEN.

ENCRYPTION

Employees can use encryption software supplied to them by the Commission for purposes of safeguarding sensitive or confidential business information. Employees who use encryption on files stored on a company computer must provide their supervisor with a sealed hard copy record (to be retained in a secure location) of all of the passwords and/or encryption keys necessary to access the files.

SECTION EIGHT.

PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE FORUMS

A. Employees should remember that any messages or information sent on company-provided facilities to one or more individuals via an electronic network—for example, Internet mailing lists, bulletin boards, and online services—are statements identifiable and attributable to the Commission.

B. The Commission recognizes that participation in some forums might be important to the performance of an employee's job. For instance, an employee might find the answer to a technical problem by consulting members of a news group devoted to the technical area.

SECTION NINE.

VIOLATIONS

Any employee who abuses the privilege of their access to e-mail or the Internet in violation of this policy will be subject to corrective action, including possible termination of employment, legal action, and criminal liability.

SECTION TEN.

EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT ON USE OF E-MAIL AND THE INTERNET

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the foregoing policies, rules, and conditions governing the use of the Commission's computer and telecommunications equipment and services. I understand that I have no expectation of privacy when I use any of the telecommunication equipment or services. I am aware that violations of this guideline on appropriate use of the e-mail and Internet systems may subject me to disciplinary action, including termination from employment, legal action and criminal liability. I further understand that my use of the e-mail and Internet may reflect on the image of the Commission to our customers, members and the community and that I have responsibility to maintain a positive representation of the organization. Furthermore, I understand that this policy can be amended at any time.

Employee Name (please print):

_____ Date: _____

Employee Signature:
