



**North Carolina
Department of Environment
and Natural Resources**

P O L I C Y

Section: Secretary's Office

Number:

Subject: Electronic mail (E-mail)

Approved By: DENR Secretary

Eff. Date: Sept 2, 1997

Revised:

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1. Electronic mail messages, including attachments, should be used as much as possible to conserve resources, to reduce operating costs and to minimize unnecessary meetings.
 2. Electronic mail messages are covered within the definition of "public records" in G.S. 132-1. Where appropriate, E-mail may be exempt from disclosure as a confidential document--for example, certain communications by legal counsel, personnel records, and other legal exceptions to public record disclosure.
 3. All E-mail is the property of the Department. Employees should not have any expectations of privacy in the use of E-mail, except as previously noted with regard to established exceptions to public records disclosure.
 4. E-mail is intended for use for official State business and matters within the scope of employment, broadly defined.
 5. Minimal and necessary personal or quasi-business communications via the E-mail systems are acceptable, particularly where convenience (and ultimate savings of State employee time and State resources) dictates their use; but in no event may their use interfere with normal business activities.

Illustrative examples of acceptable "minimal and necessary" usages, of a personal or quasi-business nature, are:

- a) Notices of social and public service events, such as "Habitat for Humanity", blood drives, etc.
- b) Work group gatherings in or out of the office (group lunches, ball games, birthdays, etc.)
- c) Divisional or inter-agency notification used for communicating good will among users (holiday greetings, congratulatory messages, etc.)

- d) Messages home re: office hours, travel, etc.
 - e) Messages (for convenience) to other LAN, WAN or Internet users concerning individual plans and activities. These would include communications similar to current telephone usage.
6. E-mail usage, consistent with this memorandum, should in no event involve messages which are illegal or against public policy.

Illustrative examples of unacceptable usages are:

- a) Discriminatory information (race, creed, color, gender, religion, physical disability or sexual preference).
- b) Sexual harassment or sexual misconduct.
- c) Transmittal of pornographic or profane material.
- d) Personal business use or commercial activities.
- e) Personal political beliefs or political campaign activities.
- f) Wagering, betting.

GUIDELINES

1. Assume your E-mail messages are being read by people other than the addressee. There is no reasonable expectation of privacy for e-mail messages.
2. Remember that the messages are permanent and that transcripts can be taken out of context after you've forgotten the message.
3. Take care in phrasing messages. Don't use e-mail to express strong emotions and be careful about humorous expressions, because they look different in print. Remember that E-mail is not private. Non-verbal portions of a message (i.e., humor) may not be picked up by the receiver, and may not be understood by unintended readers, so if you are joking it is best to say so.
4. Change your password often, never give it out, and consider handling confidential communications outside e-mail if at all possible).
5. Be careful that you do not send mail to the wrong person when you select a name from address lists. Be very careful with distribution lists.
6. Document retention for e-mail is governed by Department of Culture Resources policies and is essentially the same as for any other type of document. Employees should be familiar with and should follow their document retention schedule.