

# **COMPUTER, INTERNET, AND EMAIL USAGE POLICY**

## **POLICY**

It is the policy of Black Hawk County to protect and maintain an effective personal computer/management information system.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Black Hawk County employees. Whenever the provisions of this policy are in conflict with federal codes, with the Code of Iowa, or with a collective bargaining agreement between the County and a certified bargaining unit, the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement and/or the codes will prevail.

## **COMPUTER EQUIPMENT USE**

County employees shall use software only in accordance with licensing agreements to which Black Hawk County is a party. Duplication of licensed software, except for backup and archival purposes (or unless otherwise specifically authorized by the copyright holder), shall be viewed as a violation of the law and contrary to Black Hawk County policies. Black Hawk County adopts the following additional policy provisions:

- A. Black Hawk County purchases or licenses the use of copies of computer software from a variety of outside companies. Black Hawk County does not own the copyright to the software nor its related documentation and, unless authorized by the software developer, does not have the right to reproduce it for use on more than one (1) computer.
- B. With regard to software use on local area networks or on multiple machines, Black Hawk County employees shall use the software only in accordance with the license agreement. No employee shall give software to any outsider (including clients or customers) without permission from his/her Department Head.
- C. Legitimate software (software approved by the Information Technology Department) will be provided to all employees who need it. No employee of the County will make unauthorized copies of any software under any circumstances. Improper copying includes, but is not limited to, making copies for personal use or copying a program to be used on another computer within the office not already equipped with the program. Anyone found copying software other than for backup and archival purposes will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 406 "Discipline Policy" of this handbook. Additionally, employees may be subject to civil and criminal claims for copyright and software license violations. Defense of such claims may be at the employee's expense, as it will be considered outside the employee's scope of employment.
- D. Unauthorized software shall not be used on County personal computers. This policy seeks to prevent the improper duplication of software programs and to protect the

County's computer system from viruses that may be hidden on individually owned software, shareware programs, or programs obtained from electronic bulletin boards. All software used by Black Hawk County on County personal computers will be purchased following appropriate procedures. Any individually owned software or shareware programs must be approved by the Department Head and the Information Technology Department. A list of authorized shareware is available from the Information Technology Department.

E. Each employee who accesses the County network shall be required to have a unique user identification and password. Each password must meet the following requirements listed below. Passwords shall be stored in a secure location. Passwords should be changed every 60 days.

Password Structure:

Passwords must be a minimum of eight characters in length.

Passwords must incorporate at least three of the following characteristics:

*Any lower case letters (a-z)*

*Any upper case letters (A-Z)*

*Any numbers (0-9)*

*Any punctuation or non-alphanumeric characters found on a standard ASCII keyboard (! @ # \$ % ^ & \* ( ) \_ - + = { } [ ] : ; “ ’ \ / ? < > , . ~ `)*

Passwords must not include easily guessed information such as personal information, names, pets, birthdates, etc.

Passwords must not be words found in a Dictionary.

## **INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC MAIL USAGE**

A. INAPPROPRIATE USE: Electronic media may not be used for knowingly transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communications that are:

1. Discriminatory or harassing
2. Derogatory to any individual or group
3. Obscene or pornographic
4. Defamatory or threatening
5. Illegal
6. Inconsistent with work rules or this Employee Handbook

Use of the County's equipment and electronic media access to gain unauthorized access to remote or external systems is prohibited. Such use is subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

**B. LIMITED EXPECTATION OF PRIVACY:** Black Hawk County owns, maintains and provides an electronic mail (email) system for use in conducting County business. Both the email system hardware and software are the property of Black Hawk County. Additionally, all communications and information sent, received, or stored in this system are county records and property of Black Hawk County. Employees have no right of personal privacy in any electronic information created and/or communicated using email, word processing, utility programs, spread sheets, voicemail, telephones, Internet/BBS access, etc.

The County routinely monitors patterns of data communications (e.g., number called or site accessed, call length, time of day) for cost analysis regarding allocation and the management of the County's gateway to the Internet.

The County reserves and intends to exercise its right to review, audit, intercept, access and disclose messages created, received, or sent over the electronic mail system for any purpose. Therefore, employees should not assume electronic communications are private or confidential, and should transmit highly sensitive information in other ways. All business or personal incidental usage is considered public information and is subject to disclosure at any time. As such, the County reserves the right to bypass employee passwords to obtain information necessary to conduct county business.

Even though the County has the right to retrieve and read any email messages, those messages should still be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve, delete, copy, modify or read any email messages that are not sent to them. Any exception to this policy must receive prior approval by the appropriate Department Head and the Information Technology Director.

**C. COUNTY BUSINESS USE:** Electronic media and services are primarily for County business use. Employees shall demonstrate a sense of responsibility and may not abuse the privilege. Personal use of the Internet should take place on break periods, meal periods, or after work hours. Commercial or partisan political use is a violation of Iowa law.

**D. COUNTY IMAGE:** Any message or information sent by an employee to one or more individuals via an electronic network are statements identifiable and attributable to Black Hawk County. All communications sent by employees via a network must comply with this and other County policies, and may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information.

**E. SECURITY OF SYSTEM:** 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. The County reserves the right to limit the use of software that is likely to cause network congestion.

F. Black Hawk County provides email communication capability to facilitate county business. Careful judgment must be exercised in the determination of when email should be created, as well as the appropriate content and retention periods of email communications. Responsibility for appropriate email content initiates with the sender but is also assigned to the recipient. All users of county email are responsible for efficient email management and retention practices.

G. This policy is intended to provide instruction relating to the creation and retention of records in the email environment. In addition to this policy, email is subject to other applicable policies set out in the county policy manual. Limited personal communication is acceptable, but misuse of the system for any reason is not acceptable. Employees shall, whenever practical, access email from the County-supplied accounts, which have appropriate monitoring software to reduce SPAM and viruses on the County network, and which can log messages for future access if necessary for legal purposes.

H. An email containing inappropriate content should promptly be deleted. Also, it may be prudent to contact the sender to indicate its inappropriateness.

I. The electronic email 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 race, creed, color, national origin, citizenship status, religion, age, sex, pregnancy, mental or physical disability, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, military status or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state or local law.

J. The electronic mail system shall not be used to send or receive copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary financial information, or similar materials without prior authorization.

K. Caution should be taken to ensure that messages are addressed to the appropriate recipient; it is easy to inadvertently address e-mail messages incorrectly. Confidential messages or messages that contain information that is protected by laws or regulations must include a warning regarding accidental transmission to an unintended third party, similar to the following:

*NOTICE: Subject to the requirements of the Iowa Open Records Law, this message and accompanying documents are covered by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. Subsection 2510-252, and contains information intended for the specified individual(s) only. This information may be confidential. If you are not the intended recipient or an agent responsible for delivering this message to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this message in error and that any review, dissemination, copying or the taking of any action based on the contents of this message may be prohibited. If you have received this message in error, please notify us immediately by e-mail and delete this message.*

- L. The above notice is recommended for all email transmissions.
- M. Forgery (or attempted forgery) of electronic mail messages is prohibited.
- N. Black Hawk County reserves the rights to review, audit, intercept, access, and disclose all messages created and attachments included, 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 Black Hawk County without the permission of the employee.
- O. Employees shall not use a password, access a file, or retrieve any stored information, unless authorized to do so. Employees should not attempt to gain access to another employee's messages.
- P. It is prohibited to use the county's computer and electronic communication system to participate in public debate or information exchanges in a way that suggests one's personal views reflect the official views or policies of the County.
- Q. Other prohibited uses of the County's computer and electronic communication systems include sending chain letters, compromising the integrity of the County and its business in any way; and the conduct or the advertisement of personal business. Employees are cautioned to exercise care and good judgment when sending humorous material. Off-color humor in email or voice mail is strictly prohibited. Humor, irony and emotion are difficult to communicate in an email message and may be easily misinterpreted.
- R. SECURITY OF SYSTEM: Only the user's account/mailbox should be used on the mail system. Passwords should not be given to other people and should be changed frequently. The mailbox owners are responsible for all messages sent from their email account.
- S. Employees who are terminated, laid off, or are on an extended leave of absence have no right to the contents of their electronic messages, and are not allowed access to the electronic communication system. Management may access an employee's e-mail if employees are on a leave of absence, vacation, or are transferred to another department and it is necessary for County business purposes.
- T. Transferring large files (5 MB or greater) by email will slow the system down and is strongly discouraged.
- U. Any files saved on the network or a user's local hard drive may be audited for content by management. Anything considered not work-related may be removed. All removable media storage devices and media used on the network including USB flash drives, portable hard drives, CDs, DVDs, floppy disks and others, must be approved for use by the systems administrators.

- V. Playing electronic computer games on the workstation or on an Internet site is expressly prohibited.
- W. Registering on-line for non-work related email notifications such as coupons, sales, vacation packages, etc. is expressly prohibited.
- X. The County may, at its discretion, block access to inappropriate websites by County computers.

### **EMAIL RETENTION**

- A. Email records must be maintained and disposed of according to this policy.
- B. Email should be retained only on county equipment offsite.
- C. All persons covered under this policy are responsible for all email located in their electronic or hardcopy files or otherwise under their control.
- D. Email sent or received should be deleted as soon as it is no longer required. If email is retained for ongoing business reasons, it must be disposed of consistent with county retention policies.
- E. County records retention policies apply equally to hardcopy documents, email communications, and other records. For example, if a record retention policy requires that documents regarding contracts be maintained for ten years, email communications and other records in this category must be kept (electronically or as hard copy) for the same period.
- F. When the retention period for an email communication has expired, users must examine the files under their control where the record was kept and all versions of the record should be deleted at the same time. For example, versions of the same email communication may appear in hard copy, Microsoft Word and as email attachments.
- G. Destruction of email communications and other records must immediately cease when a non-destruction notice from the county attorney is issued or if an individual otherwise becomes aware of any pending or threatened investigation or litigation. At that time the county attorney should be contacted. Disposal must not resume until approved by the county attorney.
- H. The user should delete all messages from the mail system when they are no longer needed, as a finite amount of storage space is available for electronic mail. The user should retain messages only if relevant to county business or an anticipated litigation.

### **PENALTIES**

Employees misusing electronic communications system privileges may be subject to discipline. Violations of this policy may be grounds for discharge. Appropriate disciplinary action may be

taken against individuals found to have engaged in prohibited use of Black Hawk County's electronic communication resources.