

**City of Signal Hill Procedure
Electronic Mail Policy**

DATE: September 24, 2007

REVISION NO.: 002

APPROVED: [REDACTED]

DEPARTMENT: Finance

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the use of electronic mail (hereinafter "e-mail") on the computer network of the City of Signal Hill (hereinafter "City"). E-mail is a business tool, which will be used in accordance with generally accepted business practices and current law reflected in the California Public Records Act to provide an efficient and effective means of intra-City Communications.

II. DISCUSSION

This policy shall apply to all City elected officials, appointed officials, employees, and consultants or other non-employees utilizing electronic communications with the city (hereinafter "email users").

III. POLICY

E-mail is for business-related purposes only. All e-mail communications are the property of the City. The City reserves the right to retrieve and make proper and lawful use of any and all communications transmitted through the e-mail system. The City respects the individual privacy of its employees. However, an employee cannot expect privacy rights to extend to work-related conduct or the use of City-owned equipment or supplies. Consequently, e-mail users shall have no reasonable expectation of privacy in communications sent over the e-mail network as e-mail communications are not confidential. For purposes of this policy, e-mail shall also include all messages transmitted on the internet.

A. Proper Use of E-Mail

1. Communications transmitted over the City's e-mail system shall involve City business activities or contain information related to the accomplishment of City business, administration or practices.
2. Employees shall not establish and/or use private e-mail accounts. This includes any accounts on Yahoo, Hotmail, Verizon, etc.
3. Users of e-mail are responsible for the management of their mailbox and its associated folders. E-mail documents will remain in a folder until deleted. The City, through its MIS department, will not maintain a backup of any e-mail. It is the user's responsibility to make archival copies if desired.

B. Prohibited Use of e-Mail

1. Messages that disrupt or threaten to disrupt the efficient operation of City business or administration are prohibited. Messages prohibited in this section include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Messages that publicize a personal dispute other than according to an approved grievance or complaint procedure.
 - b. Messages that constitute or counsel insubordination.
 - c. Messages that may harm close working relationships.
 - d. Messages that may take employees away from their assigned tasks.
 - e. Messages that may undermine the City's ability to provide public services through its employees.
 - f. Messages that harm the integrity of the system or network.
2. Messages that violate laws, violate individual rights, create potential liability for the City or violate public policy of the State of California are prohibited. These prohibited messages include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Messages which are pornographic or obscene.
 - b. Messages in conflict with the City's Harassment Policy or any other policy prohibiting discrimination, including harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation or any other status protected by local, State or Federal law.
 - c. The use of racial, religious or ethnic slurs.
 - d. Messages intended to harass or annoy.
 - e. Threats that implicate personal safety.
3. E-mail shall not be used to solicit or proselytize others for non-job related commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations or other non-job related activities.

C. Status of E-mail Communications

1. E-mail communications are not confidential and are subject to review by City management and disclosure to the public.
2. E-mail communications may be subpoenaed or requested under the Public Records Act and/or may be used as evidence in court or as part of an investigation. The content of e-mail may be disclosed within or outside the City without employee permission or knowledge.
3. City management has the authority to access communications in the e-mail system at any time for any lawful city business-related reason and may periodically monitor an employee's e-mail file.
4. The City has unlimited access to protect system security or the city's property rights. However, the city does not routinely monitor e-mail communications and expects that employees will voluntarily abide by this policy.
5. Treat confidential e-mail similar to other confidential letters & memos. Clearly mark them "Confidential" and don't leave them on your screen for others to read.

D. Penalties for Misuse of e-Mail

1. All e-mail users will be provided a copy of this policy, upon the granting of access to the computer network. Each person shall be required to complete an Acknowledgement (Attachment A), which will be maintained by the Personnel Department.
2. Failure on the part of any employee to comply with the provisions of this policy shall subject the employee to disciplinary action. Further, failure to comply with any provision of this policy may result in suspension or revocation of the privilege of using or accessing e-mail.
3. Failure on the part of any appointed or elected official to comply with the provisions of this policy will constitute grounds for City Council to deny the official access to the e-mail system and/or for removal.
4. Failure on the part of any contractor or consultant to comply with the provisions of this policy will constitute grounds for termination of their contract with the City.

E. Records Management

1. E-mail messages, which are intended to be retained in the ordinary course of the City's business, are recognized as official records that need protection/retention in accordance with the California Public Record Act. Because the e-mail system is not designed for long-term storage, e-mail communications which are intended to be retained as an official record should be printed out and the hard copy filed in the appropriate subject file.
2. The City and/or its employees will maintain hard copies of all e-mail messages determined by staff to be official records for a minimum of two (2) years or as otherwise designated in the City's retention schedule. These hard copies are subject to public disclosure, even if they are drafts or informal notes, unless the need to retain their confidentiality outweighs the need for disclosure. Government Code Section 6254(a).
3. E-mail communications that are not intended to be retained and which serve no useful purpose to the City should be deleted from the system.

F. Unauthorized Monitoring of e-Mail

It is a violation of City policy for any employee, including system administrators, supervisors, or programmers to use the electronic mail and computer systems for purposes of satisfying idle curiosity about the affair of others by obtaining access to the files or communications of others with no substantial business purpose or legal authority. Abuse of authority by accessing e-mail for such purposes is prohibited.

G. E-mail Etiquette and Use

1. Remember you are representing the City through your communications both internally and externally, and it is critical that you maintain a positive image for both yourself and the City.
2. Be certain that your message is addressed to the proper person. Be sure you check the list of persons being e-mailed when you choose a REPLY ALL function. E-mail should not be used for broadcast purposes unless the message is of interest to all users.
3. Capitalize words only to emphasize an important point or to distinguish a title or heading. Capitalizing whole words that are not titles is generally interpreted as shouting.

4. Be professional and careful of what you say about others. E-mail is easily forwarded and blind copied.
5. Be cautious when using sarcasm and humor. Without face-to-face communication, humor may be viewed as criticism. By the same token, also carefully read what others write. The perceived tone may be easily misinterpreted.
6. Some e-mail messages, especially those written in “the heat of the moment” are best unsent. Think twice before sending angry or sarcastic messages or using e-mail to let off steam.
7. Be aware that deleting or erasing information, documents, or messages maintained on the City network is, in many cases, ineffective. Information kept on the City’s system may be electronically recalled or recreated regardless of whether it may have been erased or deleted by an employee. Because of the way in which computers re-use file storage space, files and messages may exist even after a user assumes they are deleted. Finally, information or messages may still exist in the storage area of other users. Therefore, employees who delete or erase information or messages should not assume that such information or messages are confidential

H. Viruses

Viruses are often transmitted to networks via e-mail as attached files. Because of this, an employee should never open an email attachment (usually Word or Excel documents) if you do not know the sender.

ATTACHEMENT "A"

CITY OF SIGNAL HILL
EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: E-MAIL POLICY

I hereby acknowledge receiving a copy of the Electronic Mail Policy. I also understand that any questions concerning this policy may be addressed to Dennis MacArthur, Director of Finance.

I understand that the City's e-mail system and computer network are for City business only and that I am not to establish and/or use a private e-mail account. I further understand that all information contained on or communicated through the e-mail system and computer network are subject to monitoring, review and disclosure. Consequently, I may not assume that any information stored on or communicated through any City system or network is confidential or private. Finally, I understand that violation of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____ Date: _____