City of Northampton, Massachusetts

Human Resources Department

Effective Date: 7/1/97
Updated: 5/4/06

Computer/Internet/Network Use

POLICY

It is the policy of the City of Northampton that as a condition of providing a computer, internal and external e-mail, and Internet access to employees, certain procedures and restrictions will be followed. The City reserves the right, for legitimate business purposes, to monitor, review and retrieve any information stored on or transmitted with City equipment and, therefore, users should not have the expectation that their email communication or documents stored on City equipment will remain private. City computers, internal and external City e-mail accounts, and Internet access through the City are, in fact, City property and are considered tools to be used to reduce paper, facilitate communications, and improve customer support. Generally, official City business is to be conducted utilizing these tools with certain restrictions regarding personal use. The restrictions on personal use are to ensure laws are not violated and do not cause consumption of large amounts of resources that interfere with legitimate business uses.

SCPOE

This policy applies to *all* full-time, part-time, and intermittent City employees to include School Department and Smith Vocational School District employees, as well as grant-funded position employees. This policy also applies to contractors, consultants, temporaries, interns, members of City boards, commissions, elected officials of the City of Northampton, including those users affiliated with third parties who access the City of Northampton computer networks.

Note: Throughout this policy, the word "user" will be used to collectively refer to all such individuals indicated above. This policy also applies to all computer and data communication systems (telecommunication systems) used at, owned by, and/or administered by the City of Northampton.

PROCEDURES

A. Employee use of a City computer, internal and external e-mail accounts, Internet access through the City, and use of network and telecommunications systems provided by the City of Northampton generally must be used only for business purposes with the following practices strictly prohibited:

   1. Distribution or printing of copyrighted materials (including articles and software) violating copyright laws.
   2. Sending, receiving, printing or otherwise distributing proprietary data or other confidential information of the City of Northampton violating City policy.
   3. Offensive, improper, or harassing statements or language including disparagement of others based on their race, marital status, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs (note: originators of e-mail messages can be identified.)
   4. Sending, voluntarily receiving, or soliciting sexually oriented messages or images. To include visiting sites with inappropriate content. Accessing pornographic sites or sites that have pornographic content is strictly prohibited.
   5. Operating a business or soliciting money for personal gain.

6. Sending chain letters, gambling, or engaging in any activity that violates the law.

B. Incidental *personal use* is permissible within the following restrictions:

1. Use does not consume more than a trivial amount of resources that could otherwise be used for business purposes.
2. Use does not interfere with user productivity;
3. Use does not preempt any city-business activity.
4. Use is not for any purposes that will produce personal financial gains.
5. Use is not for the distribution or printing of copyrighted materials (including articles and software) violating copyright laws.
6. Use is not for sending, receiving, printing or otherwise distributing proprietary data or other confidential information of the City of Northampton violating City policy.
7. Use is not for sending, voluntarily receiving or soliciting offensive, improper, or harassing statements or language including disparagement of others based on their race, marital status, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.
8. Use is not for visiting sites with inappropriate adult content or pornography.
9. Use is not for sending, voluntarily receiving or soliciting sexually oriented messages or images.
10. Use is not used for sending chain letters, gambling, or engaging in any other activity that violates the law.

Note: Permissible incidental use of a City computer would, for example, involve responding to an E-mail message about a luncheon. Activities that do not preempt any business activity would, for example, involve checking GIS maps for personal, noncommercial purposes after business hours. Separately, examples of personal use include game playing and writing a resume after business hours. Personal uses that are not allowed include, but are not limited to downloading music or movie files, listening to music, Internet radio broadcasts or watching videos over the network.

C. The City of Northampton reserves the right to monitor and disclose employee e-mail messages and computer use. Violations of this policy may result in suspension of computer/Internet/network privileges and/or progressive discipline action up to, and including, discharge.

Approved:

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Mayor

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