

## **Polk County Local Government Internet & Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and minimum requirements governing the acceptable use of County-provided Internet Access, electronic mail (e-mail) services. By establishing and maintaining compliance with this policy, risks and costs to the County can be minimized while the valuable potential of these communication tools can be realized, for the benefit of the County and its citizens.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Ensure that the use of County provided Internet Access, e-mail services are related to, or for the benefit of, county government;
2. Define appropriate personal usage of County provided Internet Access and E-mail services;
3. Inform users that electronic messages and documents are subject to the same laws, regulations, policies, and other requirements as information communicated in other written formats;
4. Minimize disruptions to county government activities from inappropriate use of County provided Internet access and/or email.
5. Provide users with guidelines describing their personal responsibilities regarding confidentiality, privacy, and acceptable use of County provided Internet access and email services as defined by this policy; and
6. Obtain signatures from each employee stating their agreement to this policy. The original will be held in the employee's personnel record in the Manager's office. Department Heads will also be provided a copy.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all full and part-time employees, temporaries, contractors, volunteers, and other individuals who are provided Internet access and/or e-mail services (hereinafter referred to as "users"). Others may be provided Internet access and email services as necessary for their business purpose with Polk County (hereafter referred to as "The County"), provided they abide by all applicable rules in this policy.

### **Policy**

It is the policy of the County Of Polk to provide technological resources to its employees to enhance their ability to perform their job and to provide a higher level of service to all citizens. To this end, the County will provide guidelines for the use of such technology and train its employees in their proper usage. The County will also require responsible usage of these resources and hold users accountable for inappropriate use.

## **Background**

E-mail is an efficient and timely communication tool that can be used to accomplish government functions and conduct the County's business within its organization, with other governmental agencies, with business partners, and with the public. Email can help county agencies and departments improve the way they conduct business by providing a quick and cost effective means to create, transmit, and respond to messages and documents electronically. Well designed and properly managed e-mail systems expedite business communications, reduce paperwork and automate routine office tasks thereby increasing productivity and reducing costs. Daily tasks are accomplished more rapidly as individuals use e-mail services for sending and receiving texts as well as avoiding telephone tag.

Many of the same benefits can be accorded to the Internet or the World Wide Web. The resources are innumerable. Access to state and federal agencies, other counties, and their agencies along with vendors and businesses prove invaluable on a daily basis.

As with any County-provided resource, the use of the internet and email services, should be dedicated to legitimate county business and is governed by rules of conduct similar to those applicable to the use of other information technology resources. Use of the internet and e-mail service is a privilege, which imposes certain responsibilities and obligations on users and is subject to county government policies and local, state, and federal laws.

## **Definitions**

E-mail – Any mail generated and transferred by electronic means. For our purposes we are defining email as both web-mail and workstation residing mail.

Internet Access – Access to the internet granted to users of the Polk County Local Government Network.

## **Responsibilities**

Employees who are provided with Internet access and e-mail service are required to use these resources responsibly. This policy defines responsibilities of those who use these services on a daily basis.

## **Information Technology Department**

The Information Technology Department is responsible for the administration of email services and providing access to the internet. This shall include maintenance of the servers and network that allows these services to take place, installation and updates of the email applications and web browsers, and training in the proper use of the email application. This department shall also provide user training of policy issues, emphasizing acceptable and unacceptable users and respond to questions of interpretation. This department shall be responsible for on going review and maintenance of this policy as required by changes in local, state, and federal law and as necessary for local considerations. Major policy changes will be developed in consultation with

the County Manager, County Attorney, and department heads. This department will also monitor performance and security issues on an on-going basis.

### **Department Head**

It is the responsibility of the Department head to support and administer this policy and to ensure employee knowledge of and compliance with the principles outlined herein, ensuring they are scheduled for and receive training. Department heads may also consider providing additional restrictions and guidelines regarding the use of email and internet access. Department heads should be aware of productivity issues that may arise from the overuse/misuse of email and web surfing.

### **User**

It is the responsibility of each user to understand this policy and use the County provided resources in an acceptable manner. Email is not private communication. All information transmitted via the County's Internet/email systems are the property of the County and are subject to inspection by county officials. Disclosure may occur inadvertently when email is forwarded or directed to the wrong recipient or printed to a common area where others can read them.

Because of the various security, legal, and productivity issues referenced in this policy, each user has the following responsibilities:

1. All employees must comply with this policy. Users are expected to understand this acceptable use policy (AUP) and acceptable and unacceptable uses in general. The burden of responsibility is on the user to inquire as to the proper use of the Internet and email.
2. The content of anything exchanged (sent and/or received) via email communications must be appropriate and consistent with county personnel and/or agency policy, subject to the same restrictions as any other correspondence.
3. Email communications, if allowed to accumulate on a server, can quickly consume the server's disk space and cause system problems. Although deletion of unnecessary email communications is encouraged, users should refer to an approved retention schedule for proper procedure regarding disposition of email communications.
4. Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances.
5. Comply with county and department/agency policies, procedures, and standards.
6. Be courteous and follow accepted standards of etiquette.
7. Respect and protect others' privacy and confidentiality.
8. Be responsible for the use of the Internet and their email accounts.
9. Use information technology resources efficiently and productively.

Users should remember that existing and evolving rules, regulations, and guidelines on ethical behavior of government employees and appropriate use of government resources apply to the use of electronic communications systems supplied by the County of Polk.

## **Personal Use**

Personal use of County provided Internet access and email services are allowed with the following restrictions:

1. Users should be aware that personal use is still subject to all of the rules in this policy including inspection and monitoring. Personal use does not imply private use.
2. There must be no cost to the county.
3. Use must be conducted on the user's own time. However, just as personal telephone calls are permitted providing that they do not interfere with an employee's obligation to carry out their assigned duties in a timely and effective manner, so shall personal internet access and email be permitted.
4. Use must not interfere with other employees performing their jobs or undermine the use of county resources for official purposes.
5. Use of county technology resources, such as the internet and email, for operating a personal business is prohibited.
6. Personal use of county resources by an employee neither expresses nor implies sponsorship or endorsement by the county.

## **Acceptable Use**

Acceptable internet and/or email activities are those that conform to the purpose, goals, and mission of the County and to each user's job duties and responsibilities. The following list, although not all-inclusive, provides some illustrations of acceptable use:

1. Communication and information exchange directly related to the mission, charter or work tasks of the Polk County agency.
2. Communications for the purpose of maintaining job knowledge and skills or for professional development, this is not limited to but includes education relevant to the User's current job field and is at the discretion of the User's department head.
3. Use in applying for or administering grants or contracts for county government research programs or work related applications.
4. Communications with state agencies, other counties and businesses with which the county conducts business.
5. Acceptable use must be legal, ethical, reflect honesty, and show restraint in the consumption of shared resources.

## **Unacceptable Use**

Unacceptable use can be defined generally as activities that do not conform to the purpose, goals, and mission of the agency and to each user's job duties and responsibilities. Any Internet access or email usage in which acceptable use is questionable should be avoided. The user should never assume an activity is acceptable.

The following list, although not all-inclusive, provides some illustrations of unacceptable uses:

1. Use of email for any purpose that violates a federal, state, or local law.
2. Use for any for profit activities unless specific to the charter, mission or duties of the Polk County Agency.
3. Unauthorized non-profit business activities. This includes the conducting of any non-governmental related fund raising or public relations activities such as solicitation for religious and political causes.
4. The display of any kind of sexually explicit image or document on any county system, which is also a violation of the county's sexual harassment policy. In addition, sexually explicit material may not be archived, stored, distributed, edited, or recorded using the county network or computing resources.
5. The display of any derogatory racial or derogatory religious content, political statements, offensive language or any material that may negatively reflect on Polk County.
6. Use of any county computing resources for illegal activity is prohibited.
7. No user may use county facilities knowingly to download or distribute pirated software or data. This includes the burning or saving of music or video off of file sharing applications.
8. No user may modify or reconfigure their Internet web browser connection options or email application account information without prior approval from the Information Technology Department.
9. Any user who attempts to disable, defeat, or circumvent any county security facility will be subject to immediate termination of Internet access and email service and subject to disciplinary action.
10. The user should not violate intellectual property rights (copyright), information ownership rights, or system security mechanisms.
11. NO hate mail, NO harassment of any form, NO chain letters, NO pornography, NO \$\$\$\$ opportunity letters.
12. No free standing instant messaging programs. Stripped down versions of Instant Messengers are acceptable (see personal use section above). These will be taken on a case by case basis by the IT Director. Approval must be obtained by the department head from the IT Director before any Instant Messenger can be used.
13. Continuous streaming radio and video is not acceptable. These applications take up a lot of the internet connection causing other users to slow down.
14. The use of any encryption method not approved by the IT department or otherwise mandated by a state agency is prohibited.

## **Training**

All employees will be trained in the various aspects of this policy. New employees will need to receive training before they are given access to the network, Internet, or email. Department heads are responsible for scheduling new employees for this training.

## **Monitoring**

The IT department will monitor performance and security issues on an on going basis and will only monitor internet access and email when authorized by the IT director. This does not preclude incidental access in the normal course of maintenance of the email system or the



network in general. However, since all activity using the internet or email is the property of the County, the County may at any time examine any messages or files on the system. No user should have any expectation of privacy.

## **Security**

Each user is responsible for all actions taken while using his/her user profile, password, or access code. Therefore, none of these should be shared with anyone else (including other employees of the county, except the IT department). They must not be written down and stored, posted anywhere, or stored on the computer system in an unencrypted form.

The examination, modification, copying or deleting of files and/or data belonging to other employees without their prior consent is prohibited, except under the direction of the Department Head or higher authority.

All users are responsible for the prevention of the spread of viruses. Any file, program or document received on media (diskettes, CD-Rom, or tapes), through the internet (including email) or through file transfer must be checked for viruses immediately thereby eliminating the possibility of infecting the County's entire network. The IT department will provide anti-virus software for every computer and server.

The internet provides easy access to software distributed by companies on a trial basis. The free access does not indicate that the software is free or that it may be distributed freely. Applicable software copyright laws must be followed. In addition, software may not be loaded onto any county computer system, through any of the above methods, without prior approval from the IT director. This includes shareware, freeware, personal software, or internet distributed programs.

Modems shall not be added to any networked computer system without prior approval from the IT Director. Modems provide a backdoor to the county network, which creates significant vulnerability to security threats. Additionally, no home or personal computers will be allowed on the County Network or in county office space. Personal or home computers cannot be guaranteed virus or spy-ware free and thus pose a significant threat to the county network. Possibly infected media transferred from one machine to another is a potential threat to the county network and must be avoided at all costs.

## **Website Content & Transparency**

Connection with citizens is a critical component of our County Government Organization. Polk County Government Employee's should attempt to reach out to citizens via all means available. Our Government Website is a great conduit to the Citizens of the County and should be utilized frequently. Website content should be updated quarterly by department heads. Pictures, instructions, public announcements, and calendar updates can all count towards this update requirement. All updates to the County Website should abide by the public information policy set forth by the County Manager and should be approved through the County Technology Director before posting.

## **Retention of Email**

Employees should be aware that when they have deleted a message from their workstation mailbox it might not have been deleted from the central mail system. The message may be residing in either the sender or receiver's mailbox or forwarded to other recipients. Furthermore, the message may be stored on any of the aforementioned back-ups for an indefinite period. Note that email has been classified as "public" documents, which should be kept in mind when you create or store email. Users should delete email messages as soon as possible after reading. An accumulation of files will degrade system performance and response times.

## **Enforcement and Violations**

Violation of this policy may result in termination of Internet Access or email services, possible disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal and criminal charges where appropriate. Termination of services may be at the request or determination of the department head, IT director, or higher authority. Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Polk County Personnel Policy.

## **Written Agreement Required**

The county will require employees to read and signify acceptance of the terms of this policy by signing the following "Understanding of Policy" before making Internet Access or email service available.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Adopted July 18, 2005**  
**Amended December 2, 2013**