

**TOWN OF NEEDHAM**  
**ACCESS AND USE OF TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**  
**POLICY #420**

**1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this policy is to convey the Town's standards for the use of the Town's telecommunications systems including telephones, electronic mail (e-mail), facsimile machines, and the Internet.

**2. APPLICABILITY**

All General Government employees are subject to the provisions of this policy.

**3. POLICY**

The Town of Needham provides staff with the ability to send messages and information through voice mail, fax mail, electronic mail, and, in some cases, through the Internet. The purpose of this technology is to allow the Town to serve the public more effectively. Therefore, it is the Town's policy that the use of these capabilities and equipment is subject to the same management oversight as any other employee activity. The telecommunication systems are the property of the Town and should be used for appropriate business purposes.

**4. PROCEDURES**

- 4.1** E-mail, and related on-line services, are the property of the Town and are to be used for business-related purposes. While sending and retrieving personal messages is not expressly prohibited, any personal use of the system must be at a level that will not interfere in any way with the system's ability to serve its intended official purpose, or with individual employee performance. Employees should use discretion in utilizing this resource, and should generally do so before or after normal working hours or during designated lunch periods. Use of the system for any commercial activity for personal gain is prohibited. Abuse of this privilege could result in loss of the privilege for the individual and possibly others through the organization.
- 4.2** Employees should not assume that voice mail or e-mail messages or Internet postings are personal or confidential. The fact that employees have personal passwords does not render all electronic communication confidential or private. All messages sent or received by E-mail or the Internet are stored automatically on the Town's computer system and deleting such messages will not erase them from the Town's computer files. Subject to certain exceptions in the law, e-mail messages and Internet postings may also be considered public records.
- 4.3** Notwithstanding the Town's right to retrieve and read any voice mail or e-mail messages or Internet postings for business purposes, such messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and should be accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read any messages that are not sent to them unless express permission is given by the intended recipient. With the

exception of the provisions contained in sub-section 4.6 below, employees should not use a password, access a file, or retrieve any stored information unless authorized to do so.

- 4.4** The telecommunications systems should not be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages or images. Among those which are considered offensive are any messages or images which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comment that offensively addresses someone's age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.
- 4.5** The telecommunications systems should not be used for any illegal activity, including but not limited to, the transmission of copyrighted or trade secret material, the transmission of obscene, defamatory, or threatening material, or the propagation of any type of criminal activity.
- 4.6** Upon the request of the department manager, and subject to the approval of the Town Administrator, the monitoring of telecommunications systems usage may be authorized. Reasons for monitoring include, but are not limited to, review of employee productivity, investigations into claims of possible criminal activity, and investigations into violations of this policy. No personnel action will be taken solely on the basis of personal information, which is unrelated to the reason for the monitoring, that may be unintentionally encountered in such monitoring.
- 4.7** All users are expected to undertake precautions to prevent infection of Town computers by computer viruses. Executable programs imported from other sites to Town computers may not be used unless they have been authorized by the Director of Management Information Systems and have been subjected to virus detection procedures approved by MIS. The MIS department may from time to time impose additional restrictions or regulations on the importing of remote files and such restrictions or regulations shall be considered part of this policy.
- 4.8** Public records laws guarantee citizen access to governmental processes and require governmental accountability. However, they do not require unlimited access to governmental databases, or direct governmental employees to use their time responding to specialized data requests free of charge. Raw computer data and specialized analysis and reports do not fall within the traditional definition of public records. The Office of the Secretary of State has promulgated a schedule of allowable charges for the retrieval of data which has been determined to be a matter of public record.
- 4.9** For security purposes, employees should either log off or revert back to a password screen saver when leaving their computer for an extended period of time. When leaving for the day, employees should log off. All electronic media should be kept away from magnets including those found in telephone receivers and paper clip holders.
- 4.10** E-mail and Internet users shall not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the Town. Neither

should they construct a communication so it appears to be from someone else (false identity).

- 4.11** Department managers are responsible for ensuring that all their employees using the Town's telecommunications systems have read this policy and understand its applicability to their activities.

## **5. SANCTIONS**

The use of the Town's telecommunication system constitutes employee consent to monitoring of systems and is conditioned upon strict adherence to this policy. Any employee who violates this policy or uses the Town's telecommunications system for improper purposes shall be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

**Access and use of Telecommunications Systems Policy**  
**Employee Confirmation of Receipt**

The use of the Town's telecommunication system constitutes employee consent to monitoring of systems and is conditioned upon strict adherence to this policy. Any employee who violates this policy or uses the Town's telecommunications system for improper purposes shall be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

I certify that I was given a copy of this policy and provided the opportunity to ask questions about its content.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature/Date