

BOISE COUNTY

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

DATE: 3/22/99

SUBJECT: Boise County Acceptable Use of Information Technology Systems

PURPOSE: Boise County maintains a variety of information technology systems to be used in the conduct of its business. These systems are the property of Boise County and are to be used for conducting the business of Boise County within the scope of the policies contained herein.

DEFINITIONS: "Information technology" means all present and future forms of computer hardware, software and services used or required for automated data processing, computer-related office automation or telecommunications (IC 67-5745A).

"Telecommunications" means all present and future forms of hardware, software or services used for transmitting voice, data, video or images over a distance (IC 67-5745A).

SCOPE: The scope of technology systems covered under this policy includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of telephones (including wireless/cellular), two-way radios, electronic mail, voice mail, facsimile (fax), internal and external computer networks (agency intranet, and the Internet).

- POLICY:**
1. Documents, messages and/or information distributed using the various technologies defined herein are considered forms of inter-office communication, some or all of which may be subject to Idaho's public records laws, and shall be treated with the same care and preparation as any other inter-office documents, messages, or information.
 2. Information distributed via these technologies may be subject to State confidentiality law (IC 63-3076). The same standards apply to confidentiality of electronic records that apply to paper documents. Employees shall disclose such information only to authorized individuals. The use of passwords for security does not guarantee confidentiality.

All passwords are available to Network Administrators. Since others within this agency or external to this agency may be able to copy, save and/or see documents, messages and information distributed using these systems (in some cases, even after being deleted or erased), employees must consider this fact when using these systems.

3. The use of these systems is reserved for the conduct of business at Boise County. These systems may not be used to promote, advocate or solicit for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations, or other non-job-related or non-agency-sanctioned activities. Incidental personal use of these systems by employees is acceptable as long as such use is lawful, non-commercial, and does not, in the judgment of management, adversely affect either overall system operation or employee job performance. Any employee use of these systems that results in unauthorized expense to the agency will be charged to said employee at current reimbursement rates established in existing law, rule or policy.
4. Boise County's policies on harassment and employee conduct apply to use of these systems (see Boise County Personnel Policies Manual and Resolution #98-6, effective January 1, 1998). Employees shall not use these systems to create and/or distribute documents or messages that are intimidating, hostile or offensive in nature.
5. Boise County shall not intentionally collect non-work-related personal data about an employee through electronic monitoring of these systems. However, Boise County reserves right to monitor these systems to ensure they are being used properly and in accordance with its policies and guidelines.
6. All cellular telephones will be under one contract negotiated by the Board of County Commissioners.
7. Any employee who violates this policy or uses these systems for improper purposes shall be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment [Boise County Personnel Policies Manual & Resolution # 98-6, effective 01/01/98].

BOISE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE GUIDELINES
(General Guidelines for using the Internet, E-Mail, Voice Mail, Telephones, Computer Networks, Fax)

A. The Internet

1. The Internet is not a secure network. It is a public infrastructure very much like a public highway with minimal "rules of the road" and virtually no police. Do not expect that any unsecured documents, messages, and information¹ distributed on the Internet to parties external to this agency cannot be copied, saved and/or seen by third parties. This also applies to unsecured documents, messages and information sent using information technology to parties within the agency. *Be careful not to disclose confidential, proprietary or personal information to unauthorized parties. Proceed with caution.*
2. Appropriate use of the Internet is subject to the same conditions, restrictions and limits as any other county-provided resource, e.g. telephones, fax machines, copy machines, county automobiles, and so on. Careless, negligent or improper use of the Internet, including any use that violates any state or federal laws or regulations, can subject employees to the same disciplinary actions as the misuse of any other county-owned and county-provided property. *See Boise County's Personnel Manual and Resolution #98-6 for details. If you are in doubt about acceptable use in a specific case, ask your supervisor.*
3. Downloading or exchanging information files across the Internet should be done with care. Transferring large files can inadvertently exhaust system resources, possibly introduce computer "worms" and viruses, and sometimes produce unexpected results. *Remember, Internet access is provided to you as a tool to assist in the performance of your duties and responsibilities, not for your private edification and enjoyment.*
4. An idle but active connection to the Internet can waste valuable "bandwidth" and can adversely affect performance for others sharing our Internet access connection. It also can, in certain cases, increase network administration overhead, as well as potentially increase security vulnerability. *Disconnect, or "hang up", your Web browser software from the Internet when you are not using it.*

¹ Documents, messages and information to which no alterations, enhancements or changes have been made that will render them inaccessible, unreadable and/or unrecognizable to any persons except those specifically authorized to access, receive and/or use them.

5. Innocent remarks, comments or messages posted to bulletin boards, chat rooms, or other Internet-based forums can, and very likely will, be construed as official policy statements sanctioned, adopted and promulgated by the County Commissioners. *Don't make any statements, comments or suggestions on the Internet unless you are duly authorized to speak for the County Commissioners.*

6. Avoid supplying personal or confidential information, often asked for in on-line surveys, about you or the County Commissioners. *Don't register personal or organizational information on the Internet unless you are specifically authorized to do so as part of your official duties.*

7. Set your Internet browser software "default" Home Page to the Boise County Home Page, unless instructed to do otherwise. *That address is: <http://www.co.boise.id.us>.*

8. Use your head. If you find yourself in a place you shouldn't be, get out. *Click on the "Home" button in your Internet browser software.*

B. E-Mail

1. Remember that there can be no expectation of privacy of e-mail messages, either internal or external to the agency. Some messages that have been deleted may under certain conditions be retrievable. Keep in mind that e-mail has been used as evidence in court. *Rule of Thumb: If it would upset you to have the whole world read something you wrote, it probably doesn't belong in an e-mail.*

2. One of the most powerful features of e-mail is the ability to create and use distribution lists - mass mailing of a single message to a specific group of individuals. It is also one of the most misused features of e-mail. Use care and good judgement in sending what you think are "one-size-fits-all messages". They can be an annoyance and disruption to some individuals on your distribution list. *Avoid mass mailings to the group "Everyone" unless you are certain that everyone must know what you have to share. Stick to business when using mass mailings.*

3. Be brief in your message content. Avoid long, rambling dissertations using e-mail. Letters and memoranda may be more appropriate communication media for complex issues. *Get to the point, but only if you have one. Experienced e-mail users are becoming increasingly annoyed by the volume of messages they must wade through each day that are overlong, unnecessary or just plain unwanted.*

4. Permanently erase and/or destroy stored or saved messages (applies to computer data files, voice mail, e-mail, faxes, etc.) that are not subject to any existing document retention policy, need or requirement as soon as is practical. *In the unlikely event of a lawsuit or legal situation, be aware that e-mail from or to you may be subject to subpoena (fax and voice mail messages, too). If so, lawyers outside this agency would have the right to read them.*

C. Voice Mail

1. Establish, practice, then record a meaningful voice mail greeting.
 - Identify yourself, and your department if appropriate.
 - Refresh your greeting if you include time-sensitive information.
 - In general terms indicate when you expect to return your calls, especially if you are going to be gone for more than a day or two.
 - Don't overdo your greeting message; keep it simple and pleasant.
 - Avoid using the phrase "I'm on the phone or away from my desk"; of course you are.

2. ALWAYS offer the caller the opportunity to be transferred to an alternate destination, preferably a "live" person. This is particularly important if people rely on you for time-sensitive information or services. *Work out backup plans with fellow employees in advance and incorporate that option in your voice mail greeting.*

3. If you answer calls for others, ALWAYS offer the caller the choice between transferring to voice mail or taking a message. *If you take a message verbally, obtain the caller's name, business or title, telephone number including (area code), and the best time to return the call. Ask if a specific message should be passed on to help the recipient understand the nature of the call.*

4. Leaving voice mail messages for others:
 - Identify yourself, and your department if appropriate.
 - Indicate to the recipient the date and time of your call.
 - Briefly explain the nature of your call, especially if you are soliciting specific information (see Number 5 below).
 - Leave a phone number of where you can be reached (including area code).
 - Indicate when you expect to be back in the office or near the telephone, if possible.

5. If a caller leaves a message soliciting specific information, prepare your response before you call back and be ready to leave a voice mail with the information requested, if necessary. *Valuable information can be transferred quickly and accurately by using voice mail without ever "talking" to the other party. You can also eliminate some of the frustration associated with voice mail "tag".*

6. Remember, modern voice mail systems handle voice messages in digital form, just like computer files. These messages can be copied, forwarded, and saved just like other computer files. Permanently erase or "delete" all voice mail messages that have no historical value. *Avoid using unsecured voice mail to transfer messages containing confidential or sensitive information.*

7. Use a password code to access your voice mail. Unauthorized users can easily listen to your stored voice mail messages while you're away from your desk if they choose to. *This has the potential to happen with alarming frequency because telephones are such commonplace devices.*

D. POTS (Plain Old Telephone System)

1. Although federal law generally prohibits the interception of electronic communication (Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 1986), some monitoring by employers is allowed in certain cases. In addition, inadvertent eavesdropping, as well as outright and intentional "snooping", can certainly take place, especially with cellular telephones. *Limit discussions of a confidential and sensitive nature over the telephone, especially when using telephones in open and public areas. Avoid discussing private and confidential issues over cellular phones altogether; move to a standard telephone if you must continue a conversation on a sensitive subject.*

2. Costs for providing telephone services have fixed, flat-rated and variable components. The costs for the actual devices (handsets, cell phones, pagers, etc.), are generally one-time and fixed. Costs for providing access to the public telephone/voice networks are generally on-going and flat-rated. But costs for long-distance and enhanced services (directory service, calling card, cell "roaming", etc.) are usage-based and variable. *Annual budgets for fixed and flat-rated costs for telephone service are relatively easy to establish; usage-based, or variable, charges are more difficult. Some strategies for controlling variable costs can be found in the attached "Tips for Reducing Telephone Usage Costs".*

3. Enhanced functions (multi-party conference, hands-free speaker, redial, speed dial, transfer, etc.) come as standard features on most new telephone systems. Some additional features can be purchased from telephone companies (call-forwarding, Caller ID, teleconference bridge, etc.). *Take time to become familiar with these features. Collaborate with colleagues on the standard use of some of these features, especially those that will impact your department's external customers and taxpayers..*

E. Computer Networks

1. Use authenticating passwords to activate, enter, and use the agency's computer network as appropriate and relevant (applies to personal computers, computer networks, e-mail, and voice mail in particular). Choose passwords that you can easily recall but are not obvious. Change passwords periodically, and always after an event which requires that you divulge them to someone other than management (system upgrade, technical problem, emergency, etc.). *Remember, all user identification passwords must be disclosed to management.*

2. The security and confidentiality oversight with the greatest potential for harm arises when you leave your desk without logging off the computer network or system. In this case, any visitor to your area can freely gain access to information only you have rights to see, and even send messages that appear to come from your department. *Be sure to log out of computer systems and networks, if you intend to leave your desk, especially if you work in an area that is easily accessible by strangers. Unless you are specifically instructed otherwise, always log off when you leave the workplace.*

3. Another serious security and confidentiality oversight occurs when users forget to promptly retrieve confidential or sensitive documents sent to network printers, especially shared printers located in unsecured and open areas. *If you don't want unauthorized eyes to see a document you just sent to the printer, you should be the first person at the printer tray. You should also verify that you are sending the document to the intended printer (in a multi-printer environment) before you start the print job.*

4. Exchanging text-based and binary (digitally encoded) computer files has become commonplace, especially with the advent of e-mail. Large amounts of digital information from a variety of sources can be moved quickly and efficiently to your PC. This activity, however, brings with it the threat of transferring computer viruses into the agency's internal systems. Use care and discretion in downloading files, especially from unknown or suspicious sources on the Internet. *Save downloaded files to a temporary directory space on your PC's local hard drive (C:), not a network drive (usually F: to Z:). Examine these files with a virus scanning program before using them. Avoid downloading files with names that end in the extensions .exe, .com, and .sys.*

F. Facsimile (Fax)

1. The fax machine has become an indispensable office tool in today's office environment, rivaling the telephone. The fact is, telefacsimile (fax) uses the existing telephone infrastructure, which may account for its popularity. It is easy to forget that the fax machine can incur long-distance toll charges just like the telephone (see POTS). The telephone company treats a fax call just like a telephone call in terms of billing. *Faxing multi-page documents may, under certain conditions, be more expensive than overnight FedEx or USPS. And faxing is certainly more expensive than e-mailing an attached file across the Internet. Consider your options before faxing lengthy documents long-distance.*

2. Documents that must be seen in their "finished" condition to appreciate their content are the most suitable for faxing. Examples are forms, pictures, and graphical representations, sometimes accompanied by text. Documents that rely solely on textual content and that were created on a computer (word processing documents, spreadsheets, etc.) may be better handled via e-mail. *The technical capabilities of the recipient and the intended use of the document will of course override this generalization. Ask the recipient which is preferred; you may be surprised that e-mail is growing in desirability as a document distribution medium.*

3. There can be no expectation of absolute privacy and confidentiality of faxed documents. One (or more) of three events could cause fax documents to be seen by unauthorized or unintended recipients:

(a) The fax machine dials the wrong number, either because the number was improperly entered, or the recipient's number has changed and the old number has been recycled. *Periodically test the validity of recipient's number and embed that number in the fax machine's dialing memory ("speed dial" feature).*

(b) The telephone switching mechanism (either agency PBX or telephone carrier's switch) errantly routes a call to another destination. *Although this does not occur often, it has happened, especially with existing analog voice circuits. Modern digital switching techniques greatly reduce the chances of this happening.*

(c) The recipient's office fax machine is in an open and unsecured environment. Because of its cost, an office fax machine is usually a shared resource. Documents of all kinds pile up during a typical day. An office manager or secretary is generally assigned the duty of distributing incoming faxes to the proper parties. *Faxes marked "Confidential" awaken a curiosity of the forbidden in most of us (imagine walking by a fax machine and seeing one marked this way with your name in the "Subject" box!). Unauthorized individuals can easily scan faxes as they walk by machines in open areas. Ask recipients to generally describe their fax environment - how faxes are distributed internally, who performs that function, where the fax machine is physically located - before you decide to send a confidential fax.*

4. Internal distribution of in-bound faxes should be organized and coordinated so that the maximum benefit of fax technology is realized. The expediency of faxing is severely diluted by allowing received faxes to languish in the machine's collection tray for a day or two before they reach the ultimate recipient. *An individual in each fax receiving area should be responsible for collecting and distributing faxes at regular intervals throughout the day.*

**BOISE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY
TIPS FOR REDUCING TELEPHONE USAGE COSTS
(Standard Handsets, Cellular/Digital Phones, Pagers and Voice Mail)**

A typical telephone bill has three major components: (1) A fixed, recurring monthly charge assessed for access to the public-switched telephone network by a local exchange carrier, (2) Long-distance toll calls generally assessed using a cost per/minute formula (although some large commercial contracts like the State's long-distance contract are based on 10-second billing increments), and (3) Other charges and credits for advanced features like voice mail, call forwarding, caller ID, and so on. The major cost component that you have some direct control over is the second one - toll charges based on time on the phone. Here are some tips you can use to reduce the overall cost of telephone service:

1. Limit the time you spend on long-distance calls you originate, or that you receive via one of the agency's "800" toll-free services (only free to the caller; the agency pays the toll!). Before you dismiss this as being overly simplistic and idealistic, consider these techniques:

a). Quickly but courteously get to the reason for the call. Random sample surveys of typical business telephone conversations indicate that up to one/half of the time spent on many calls consists of non-business "small talk" - "How's the weather?", "How was your vacation?". Although some of this is not only unavoidable, but necessary in certain cases, think about it the next time you make a long-distance call. You'll be surprised how much time is spent in chatting.

b). Anticipate the resources you may need to answer questions before you place the call. Again, this is not always possible. But when it is, you can significantly shorten the duration of long-distance calls by not having to search for information while the other party waits. If the need for additional information resources occurs during the call, tell the other party you will call them back when you've found what you need rather than putting them on hold. If the other party needs to find information for you, suggest that they call you back rather than being put on hold.

c). If you have a natural inclination to be "long-winded", try standing up at your desk during the call. This technique has been shown to trim minutes off the length of calls for many people who would otherwise sit comfortably at their desks talking endlessly on the telephone.

2. Find and use "800" numbers for the parties you call if possible. Many of the vendors with whom the county does business have toll-free numbers. Use good judgment here; this may be less appropriate for certain sensitive or "difficult" calls.

3. Use voice mail effectively. See the accompanying guidelines section on using voice mail. Using the guidelines on leaving and answering voice mail messages can often shorten the duration of long-distance calls.

4. The typical phone call averages 3 to 4 minutes according to telephone industry analysts. Try sampling your own call duration by timing your calls for one business day.

- (a) What is the average call duration (total minutes spent on phone/number of calls)?
- (b) Is there difference in duration pattern between calls you originate and calls you receive?
- (c) Is there difference in duration pattern between local and long-distance calls?

BOISE COUNTY

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT OF BOISE COUNTY'S
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS POLICY**

I, _____, recognize and understand Boise County's information technology systems are to be used for conducting County business. I understand the use of these systems for private gain is strictly prohibited.

I am aware Boise County reserves and will exercise the right to review, audit, intercept, access, and disclose all matters on these systems at any time within the scope of existing law, with or without my notice, and such access may occur during or after working hours. I am aware that violations of this policy may subject me to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

I acknowledge I have read and understand Boise County's policy regarding information technology systems.

Signature of Employee

Date Signed

Return to the Clerk's Office