

TOWN OF HAMPDEN
INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICY

I. Purpose

Electronic mail, Internet and telecommunication access are resources made available to town employees to communicate with each other, other governmental entities, companies and individuals for the benefit of the town.

II. Policy

The Town of Hampden Electronic Mail System (e-mail) is designed to facilitate town business communication among employees and other business associates for messages or memoranda. Since no computer system is completely secure, the e-mail system is not intended to transmit sensitive materials, such as personnel decisions and other similar information which may be more appropriately communicated by written memorandum or personal conversation.

The e-mail system is town property and intended for town business. The system is not to be used for employee personal gain or to support or advocate for non-town related business or purposes. All data and other electronic messages within this system are the property of the Town of Hampden. E-mail messages have been found to be public records and may be subject to the right-to-know laws, depending on their content.

In addition, the town, through its manager and supervisors, reserves the right to review the contents of employees' e-mail communications when necessary for town business purposes. Employees may not intentionally intercept, eavesdrop, record, read, alter or receive other persons' e-mail messages without proper authorization.

The Town of Hampden purchases, owns and administers the necessary software and licenses to provide access to e-mail and Internet services. Employees may not rent, copy or loan the software, or its documentation. In addition, employees may not alter, modify or change the Town's system without the prior consent of their Department head. The town has invested much time and money to secure its electronic systems from intrusion and harmful viruses. Therefore, employees may not provide alternative software to access the system. Employees may be held responsible for any damages caused by using unauthorized software or viruses they introduce into the town system. Department heads are responsible for the implementation and adherence of this policy within their departments.

III. Procedures

General Information on Passwords

While you may have a confidential password, users should be aware that this does not mean that the system is for personal confidential communication, nor does it suggest that e-mail is the property right of the employee. The use of the e-mail system is for town business. Passwords should be periodically changed to ensure security of the e-mail system. Users should not share their passwords with anyone else, other than as his or her supervisor may require.

Internet

The Internet provides the town with significant access and dissemination of information to individuals outside of the town. The use of the Internet system for access and dissemination is intended to serve town business. Like all e-mail messages, Internet messages are capable of being forwarded without the express permission of the original author. Internet messages are also routinely passed through routers before they reach their final destination. A message is "touched" many times before it gets to its recipient, and the message author should be aware of this. Therefore, users must use caution in the transmission and dissemination of messages outside the town, and must comply with all state and federal laws.

Prohibited Uses

When sending e-mail messages, appropriateness and good judgment should be used. Following are examples of Internet and e-mail uses which are prohibited:

- Communications that in any way may be construed by others as disruptive, offensive, abusive or threatening.
- Communications of sexually explicit images or messages.
- Communications that contain ethnic slurs, racial epithets, or anything that may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on race, national origin, sex, age, disability or religious beliefs.
- Solicitation for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations, or other non-job-related solicitations, except for incidental personal use.
- Access to Internet resources, including web sites and news groups, that are inappropriate in a business setting.

- Any other use that may compromise the integrity of the town and its business in any way.

Retention of E-Mail

Generally, e-mail messages are intended to be temporary communications which are non-vital and may be discarded routinely. However, depending on the content of the e-mail message, it may be considered a more formal record and should be retained pursuant to a department's record retention schedules. As such, these e-mail messages are similar to printed communication and should be written with the same care. Each department head is responsible for establishing and maintaining department retention schedules for the information communicated through the e-mail system.

However, employees should be aware that when they have deleted a message from their workstation mailbox it may not have been deleted from the central e-mail system. The message may be residing in the recipient's mailbox or forwarded to other recipients. Furthermore, the message may be stored on the computer's back-up system for an indefinite period. Note that e-mail has been classified as "public" documents, i.e., available to the media, in at least one state. Keep that in mind when you create or store e-mail.

Employees should delete e-mail messages as soon as possible after reading.

Web Site Development

The Internet is developing into an effective channel for the town to share information with citizens, visitors and customers; departments are strongly encouraged to work with staff to develop and keep up-to-date a departmental page as a link from the town's Home Page.

Applicability to Employees, Part-Time Employees, Contractors, and Other Users

This e-mail policy applies to all employees, contractors, part-time employees, volunteers, and other individuals who are provided access to the town's e-mail system. Third parties should only be provided access to the e-mail system as necessary for their business purpose with the town, and only if they abide by all applicable rules.

Employee Termination, Leave of Absence, Vacation and Other

Employees who leave employment with the town have no right to the contents of their e-mail messages and are not allowed access to the e-mail system. Supervisors or management may access an employee's e-mail if employees are on leave of absence, vacation, or are transferred from one department to another department and it is necessary for the town's business purposes.

Penalties

The misuse of the Internet or e-mail privileges may be considered sufficient cause of discipline in accordance with the Town of Hampden's Personnel Policies and Procedures, and/or other applicable rules or laws. In addition, violations of this policy or misuse of the e-mail system may be referred for criminal prosecution.

IV. Acceptance

The town may require employees to read and accept the terms of this policy before making electronic systems available.

Approved by: *William J. Romano*
Town Council Mayor

Date: 6-5-'00

IEMP00

Adopted: 6-5-'00