

Guidelines for Using Electronic Services

From time to time questions arise on the appropriate use of electronic communication services.

*In most cases, simple common sense will lead one to make the correct decision. Frequent visitation to non-university related Internet sites during work hours or from home using the university system consumes precious network resources and is unacceptable. **You will be at risk if you visit web sites that might be deemed as containing objectionable, offensive, or obscene information.***

The following guidelines may be helpful. They do not replace or supercede—only augment - university policy. Information also is available at:

<http://www.cio.ohio-state.edu/policies/policy.html>

<http://www.ag.ohio~state.edu/~commtech/policy.html>

- 1) As faculty and staff of a public university, we must uphold and respect high moral and ethical standards. Consequently use of organizational electronic communications should be done with no less commitment to such standards than for other means of communication.
- 2) Computer accounts for our electronic services are intended to aid the business and professional activities of faculty and staff. Just as for telephone or surface mail, computer accounts are for business (the organization's) purposes only. The university does allow incidental personal use of resources as long as these activities do not consume an unreasonable amount of time, do not interfere with job responsibilities, and which are otherwise in compliance with applicable laws such as sexual harassment to protect persons from offensive material. While the university Home Net service does permit personal use from home, the dial-in service (1-800 toll free) is strictly for university, job-related use.
- 3) Conduct business on computer services as if you are appearing at a public meeting or writing a letter on the organization's letterhead. Every message sent is identified in the e-mail address. It is not likely that your messages are being monitored, but the nature of electronic services is that all activity is logged in some way and may be archived.
- 4) Because of public support from federal, state, and county governments, political activity and discussions are not appropriate. It is recommended that you obtain an account from a private or commercial provider and pursue these activities after work hours.

- 5) Posting to electronic discussion groups should be restricted to seeking or providing information that will be helpful for carrying out one's job responsibility, not for personal benefit or profit.
- 6) When participating in a discussion group, be sure to be clear if you are speaking on behalf of your organization or relating your own personal views. Avoid the impression that your message is the same as your organization's, if indeed that is not the case.
- 7) Remember that privacy and libel laws apply to electronic communications as well as print. Respect the privacy of individuals who may not be aware that their comments in electronic forums could be passed along to others.
- 8) Respect the document copyrights of individuals or organizations. Do not post or forward anyone's material without permission. By all means encourage the use of our educational materials by others, but encourage them to give proper credit.
- 9) Observe accepted standards of network etiquette called Net Etiquette, This includes things such as compressing e-mail attachments whenever possible, trimming out excess lines when forwarding or replying to messages, keeping e-mail "signatures" to a minimum number of lines, and other common sense practices.