Electronic Mail

204.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the proper use and application of the electronic mail (email) system provided by the Department. E-mail is a communication tool available to employees to enhance efficiency in the performance of job duties. It is to be used in accordance with generally accepted business practices and current law (e.g., North Dakota's open records laws). Generally messages transmitted over the e-mail system should only be those that involve official business activities or that contain information essential to employees for the accomplishment of tasks and/or communications directly related to the business, administration or practices of the Department.

204.2 EMAIL RIGHT OF PRIVACY

All email messages, including any attachments, transmitted over the department computer network or accessed through a web browser accessing the department system are considered department records and therefore are the property of the Department. The Department reserves the right to access, audit and disclose for any lawful reason, any message, including any attachment that is transmitted or received over its email system or that is stored on any department system.

The email system is not a confidential system since all communications transmitted on, to or from the system are the property of the Department. Therefore, the email system is not appropriate for confidential or personal communications. If a communication must be private, an alternative method to communicate the message should be used instead of email. Employees using the department email system shall have no expectation of privacy concerning communications transmitted over the system.

Employees should not use personal accounts to exchange email or other information that is related to the official business of the Department. The use of any computer, Internet service, telephone service or other wireless service to send or receive information that may be related to public business may be subject to review or disclosure.

204.3 PROHIBITED USE OF EMAIL

Sending derogatory, defamatory, obscene, disrespectful, sexually suggestive, harassing or any other inappropriate messages on the email system is prohibited and may result in discipline.

Email messages addressed to the entire Department are only to be used for official business-related items that are of particular interest to all users. Users are reminded that all email is subject to review and scrutiny with regard to appropriate content or violation of any prohibitions. In the event that a user has questions about sending a particular email communication, the user should seek prior approval from a supervisor. Personal advertisements or announcements are not permitted.

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It is a violation of this policy to transmit a message under another user's name or email address or to use the password of another to log into the system. Users are required to log off the network or secure the workstation when the computer is unattended. This added security measure will minimize the potential misuse of an individual's email, name and/or password by others.

204.4 MANAGEMENT OF E-MAIL

All employees are expected to read and review e-mails once during every regularily scheduled work shift.

Because the end user e-mail system is not designed for, nor does it support, long-term retention and archiving of messages, e-mail that an employee desires to save or that requires retention should be stored in another database designed for long-term storage and retrieval.

Users of e-mail are solely responsible for the management of their mailboxes. Messages should be purged manually by the user regularily. All messages in excess of one month may be deleted or automatically archived at regular intervals from the system.

204.5 E-MAIL RECORD MANAGEMENT

E-mail may, depending upon the individual content, be a record under North Dakota's open records laws and must be managed in accordance with the organization's adopted records retention, archiving and destruction policy in compliance with state law (N.D.C.C. § 44-04-18 et seq.).

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