

POLICY 804 USE OF COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Policy:

The City of Anacortes provides or contracts for the communications services and equipment necessary to promote the efficient conduct of its business.

Comment:

(1) Communications systems and equipment are provided by the City of Anacortes to facilitate the performance of City work. Incidental personal use is secondary, should not interfere or conflict with business use or job performance, should clearly indicate that it is personal usage and is subject to regulation for cost controls required by the City. All communication systems must be used in compliance with applicable statutes, regulations, and the City's policies including those that require a work environment free from discrimination and harassment. Employees are expected to use common sense and sound judgment to avoid any communication which is disrespectful, offensive, or illegal.

(2) All City of Anacortes communications services and equipment, including the messages transmitted or stored by them, are the sole property of the City of Anacortes. Department Heads or as designated Division Managers may access and monitor employee communications and files considered appropriate. Communication services and equipment include, among other things: mail, electronic mail ("e-mail"), instant messaging, courier services, facsimiles, telephone systems, personal computers, computer networks, on-line services, Internet connections, Intranets, computer files, video equipment and tapes, tape recorders and recordings, pagers, cellular phones, voice mail, and bulletin boards.

(3) The City as provider of access to communication systems reserves the right to specify how the City's network resources will be used and administered to comply with this policy. Message content sent from City communication systems reflects the city's image, both positively and negatively. Employees may be subject to disciplinary action for using these resources in a manner other than for the intended purposes. The information sources available via the Internet are world wide and constantly growing in kind and number. It is not possible for any organization to fully manage the types and content of information accessed by its systems and users. Nonetheless, the City reserves the right to restrict access to any data source if/when, in its sole discretion and after appropriate review, the City determines such a source to be problematic. These restrictions do not constitute an implication of approval of other non-restricted sources.

Without exhausting all of the possibilities, the following are examples of inappropriate use of City communication systems:

(a) Exposing others, either through carelessness or intention, to materials which are offensive, obscene or in poor taste. This includes information which could create an intimidating, offensive, threatening, or hostile work environment.

(b) Any use that may for a reasonable person create or further a hostile attitude or give offense on the basis of any protected class including sex, race, color, religion, national origin, pregnancy, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, military status or any other characteristic protected by law.

(c) Communication of confidential city information to unauthorized individuals within or outside the City. (See MEDIA INQUIRIES, Policy 806.)

(d) Sending messages or information which is in conflict with applicable law or City policies, rules, or procedures.

(e) Unauthorized attempts to access data or break into any City or non-City system.

(f) Theft or unauthorized copying of electronic files or data including documents, photographs, and music or video files

(g) Intentional misrepresentation of one's identity for improper or illegal acts.

(4) Incidental personal use by employees of the City's communications services and equipment is allowed as long as the use does not interfere with the employee's work or the City's operations and does not violate any City policy. Employees must properly log any personal-use charges and reimburse the City for them. However, whenever possible, personal communications that incur usage charges should be placed on a collect basis or charged directly to the employee's personal credit card or account.

(5) City communications property or equipment may not be removed from the premises without written authorization from the employee's supervisor. Some resources (designated laptop computers and audio-visual equipment) are made available through a reservation system and may not require supervisory approval. In addition, employees should keep use of personal cell phones or other personal handheld communication devices to a minimum so that their use does not interfere with the employee's work or the City's operations.

(6) Employees should ensure that no personal correspondence appears to be an official communication of the City of Anacortes. Employees may be perceived as representatives of the City of Anacortes and, therefore, damage or create liability for the City. All outgoing messages, whether by mail, facsimile, e-mail, Internet transmission, or any other means, must be accurate, appropriate, and work-related. Employees may not use a City of Anacortes's address for receiving personal mail or use City of Anacortes stationery or postage for personal letters. Only the City of Anacortes may issue personalized stationery and business cards bearing the City's logo.

(7) Employees must bear in mind that email is not private and its source is clearly identifiable. Email messages may remain part of City business records long after they have been deleted. Electronic records, including e-mail messages, are public records subject to Washington State's Public Disclosure Records Act, and will be disclosed upon request unless an exemption to disclosure is found to apply. In general, e-mail is subject to discovery in civil lawsuits.

(8) Email may not be used for spam (unsolicited bulk email) or to send or post chain letters, messages of a political or religious nature, or messages that contain obscene, profane, or otherwise offensive material or language.

(9) Cellular Phone Reimbursement. Employees are responsible for reimbursing the City of Anacortes for all personal cellular phone charges. There is no free period for personal calls. Each personal call must be reimbursed to the City at the current rate of reimbursement. This requirement applies to both incoming and outgoing personal telephone calls. Employees are responsible for identifying personal calls on the monthly bill and reimbursing the City by check, money order, or exact cash. Payments are due within 5 working days after the employee receives the invoice copy. The employee invoice must have all personal calls checked, initialed, and submitted with payment. Failure to promptly reimburse the City of Anacortes may result in a payroll deduction. Whenever possible, personal communications that incur user charges should be placed on a collect basis or charged directly to the employee's personal credit card or account.

Instructions for determining payment due:

All Minutes and Seconds should be rounded up to the next minute.

Formula: Minutes X current rate = Reimbursement

Example: 4 minutes X \$0.10 = \$0.40

All City of Anacortes cellular phones are programmed with staff contacts to promote optimal use of the network. The Public Works Operations Division maintains the master database.

(10) Emergency Contact Employees who do not have direct access to a City of Anacortes telephone should make provisions to have emergency or other necessary incoming calls routed to a department approved telephone or to the Human Resource Department. Although the City of Anacortes will attempt to deliver personal messages to employees, it cannot and does not accept responsibility for the prompt or accurate relay of these messages.

(11) Improper use of City of Anacortes communications services and equipment or any other violations of this policy will result in discipline, up to and including termination. Improper use includes any misuse as described in this policy, any misuse that would result in violations of other City policies, as well as any harassing, offensive, demeaning, insulting, defaming, intimidating, sexually suggestive, or otherwise inappropriate written, recorded, or electronically transmitted communications. (See PRODUCTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT, Policy 202; and BEHAVIOR OF EMPLOYEES, Policy 801.)