



City of Palm Springs Administrative Policy Electronic Communications Guidelines

Purpose

To provide clarification and guidelines for the use of various City communications equipment and software, accessed either from your office or any other location.

Definitions

“Communications equipment and software” shall mean any City office equipment and/or software used as a basis for communication including, but not limited to, telephone, cellular phone and satellite phone (including voicemail), fax machine, copy machine, office automation equipment (computer terminals or personal computers, including laptops) and communications software applications such as electronic mail and access to the Internet.

“City Business Purposes” is meant to include the use of said communications equipment by clients/citizens participating in programs created or provided through City auspices.

“Personal communications equipment” is meant to describe employee owned equipment such as cellular phones, pagers and other communications equipment that can be used for wireless communications with others by voice, digital display, internet or other means.

Regulation

The use of all City communications equipment is generally restricted to official City business purposes only.

Official City business purposes include the use of City communications equipment to share information necessary for the effective and efficient operations of the City, including communications between City officials, employees, members of the public and other outside parties with which the City conducts its business and affairs. Recognized employee organizations may use this communication equipment to send information to employees they represent to inform them of meetings, happenings, or events of general or special interest. City communications equipment shall not be used for any commercial promotional purpose, or to conduct personal business.

Prohibited uses of communications equipment and software include but are not limited to:

- political activities
- religious activities
- unlawful activities
- unauthorized access to systems, software or data
- threats
- harassment
- defamation
- access to, or communication of, material or graphic images which are abusive, threatening, obscene or profane, sexually explicit, sexually suggestive, or disrespectful

- use while operating equipment or vehicles when such use creates distractions and interferes with safe operating practices
- unreasonable use of personal equipment that interferes with the duties of the employee and/or the operations of the department

Personal Use of Communications Equipment

Notwithstanding the foregoing prohibition, personal use of City and personal communications equipment may be permitted provided such use is limited to meal and rest periods, does not exceed more than thirty minutes of "active" use time in one day, and such use does not interfere with the duties of the employee or the operations of the department and does not create an unsafe or potentially hazardous work environment. Employees shall reimburse the City for personal use of City communications equipment. Active use time shall be defined as any period of time in which the employee is actively using the internet as opposed to periods of time when internet usage is inactive, and a website is 'minimized.'

No Expectation of Privacy for Voice and Electronic Mail

An employee's use of the City's electronic communications, including, but not limited to, all voice mail, computer files, internet services, and e-mail, is not confidential. The City provides no assurance of privacy with respect to any employee or other user's use of any electronic communications resource, and the City expressly reserves the right to access or monitor, with or without notice, any employee or other user's use of the City's electronic communications resources.

The City reserves the right to monitor and record individual employee and other user computer files, as well as Internet and e-mail usage, at any time as allowed by the Electronic Privacy Act of 1986. No employee or other user shall have any expectation of privacy to computer files, internet communications, or e-mail messages. The City has software and systems in place that can and will monitor and record all usage for each and every user, including, but not limited to, all internal transmissions, Internet website visits, newsgroups, e-mail messages, computer files, and file transfers into and out of the City's internal network. City representatives may access, audit, and review all activity and analyze usage patterns, and may, for whatever reason, disclose this data to ensure that the City's computer resources are devoted to maintaining the highest level of productivity.

Violations

Misuse and abuse of City communications equipment and software is a violation of the City of Palm Springs' Personnel Rules and is subject to result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

Public Records

Employees should be aware that all records, whether on paper or computerized, are subject to the mandatory public disclosure requirements of the California Public Records Act, subject to the specific exceptions provided under the Act. The information created or transmitted on any City computer resource, including Internet communications and e-mail messages, may be subject to public disclosure under the California Public Records Act or in connection with litigation.