

CITY OF MILWAUKEE E-MAIL USE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

In a given day, approximately 6,200 City of Milwaukee e-mail users exchange almost 125,000 e-mails with their coworkers. They also send or receive an additional 115,000 e-mails to/from users outside City government. These numbers translate into a staggering volume of e-mails received or sent by City employees, more than 87,000,000 messages annually, and an enormous amount of public information.

Over the past two decades e-mail has evolved from an occasional convenience to a business necessity. Growth in e-mail use comes in response to a critical business need. It facilitates sharing of information by providing City employees with an opportunity to communicate quickly and efficiently. It also offers constituents a convenient means of communicating with elected officials and City staff.

However, use of e-mail does not come without risk. Approximately 85 percent of all e-mails received at the City from external sources consist of spam or contain some form of virus, malware, or inappropriate content. The City also incurs considerable risk as e-mail content increasingly becomes recognized as public record. To protect the City from liability and information systems from damage, employees and the departments for which they work must ensure that the City's e-mail resources are used responsibly and in accordance with the following standards.

AUTHORIZATION AND ACCESS

City departments will decide which of their employees shall receive access to the City's e-mail system. Departments and employees should not consider access to e-mail a "right" of employment; decisions on allowing access should be based on whether the use of e-mail is consistent with the employee's job responsibilities, will improve employee performance, increase departmental efficiency, and best serve the needs of City customers.

Departments should routinely review employee access privileges to determine if continued access to e-mail remains consistent with the duties of the position, has enhanced the productivity of the employee and to ascertain whether the employee has used the resource effectively. Departments must ensure that access to the e-mail system benefits and does not impair the employee's ability to fulfill his or her job responsibilities and does not impose any additional costs or liabilities on the city.

Once granted access by the department, employees may use the City's e-mail system to send and retrieve business-related messages from users inside or outside of City government. Employees who do not receive access to e-mail as part of their official duties may not, under any circumstances, use the e-mail account of another city employee to send or receive e-mail. Departments should review regularly their roster of e-mail users and authorize deletion of accounts for employees who no longer work for the City.

City departments must also ensure that any and all contractors, vendors, or agents of the City will comply with all policies, rules, and requirements regarding use of the City's e-mail system. Any violation by an employee of an outside agency will result in immediate termination of access. Any reference in this document to "employee" or "City employee" shall be considered to include any contractor, vendor, or agent working for or representing the City but not in City employ.

OFFICIAL AND ACCEPTABLE USE

The City of Milwaukee encourages its employees to use e-mail for work-related communications, to assist

in providing services to citizens, and for any other activity that supports the city's mission. City departments may also choose to authorize limited incidental use of the city's computer resources for personal purposes as deemed appropriate. However, departments must ensure that such use does not impair the employee's ability to fulfill his or her job responsibilities.

City employees must use only the City's e-mail to send and receive messages for work-related communication or for official communication with constituents. Employees may not use internet-based e-mail services to conduct any type of official City business. Under no circumstances will employees be permitted to use city equipment and e-mail systems for illegal activities, profit-making ventures or political endeavors.

Employees must also abide by all applicable laws, policies, and guidelines regarding the appropriate use of e-mail. They may not send messages that can be construed as scandalous, defamatory, libelous, obscene, immoral or in violation of any intellectual property rights. E-mail users may not knowingly misrepresent themselves or their employment by the city; in messages sent they must always identify themselves honestly, accurately, and completely

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

All e-mail sent from or received through city-owned computers (including any personal messages either sent or received using an internet-based e-mail service) are considered City property. City and departmental management reserve the right to examine, at any time and without prior notice, all e-mail, directories, files and other information stored on data disks, computers, and/or other media.

Moreover, at times during the course of performing their job duties, e-mail administrators may sometimes view the content of e-mail messages. As a consequence, users should not assume any privacy or confidentiality for messages they transmit or receive via the City's e-mail system or when using City-owned computers.

E-mail does not offer an inherently secure medium for communicating information. Users should always consider that someone other than the intended recipient may intercept and read their messages; they can have no expectation of confidentiality. Therefore, users should never send confidential or sensitive information via unencrypted e-mail.

PUBLIC RECORD REQUESTS

Any e-mail messages transmitted or received using city systems are subject to public records laws and any record keeping requirements that these laws entail. Requests from outside the city for access to electronic files should be handled through the same procedures as requests for any other public record. Thus, employees should not send out files containing city information without prior approval of the department manager.

The City's e-mail archival system will automatically store all e-mail messages sent or received through the City's e-mail system. All e-mails contained in the archival system will be subject to public disclosure under open records laws.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

E-mail remains a common method of coming into contact with computer viruses or malware, particularly via links embedded in e-mails or through the use of attachments. Messages that appear to come from trustworthy or known senders may instead originate from malicious sources – due to e-mail address “spoofing” – and contain serious security risks. Users should exercise extreme caution before opening

links contained within an e-mail message, even if the message comes from a known source. Employees should also not open or attempt to read any file received as an attachment to e-mail unless specifically requested or received from a trustworthy source. If in doubt, users should attempt to verify the validity of an e-mail message with the sender.

The City of Milwaukee trusts that its employees will act responsibly, and always in the best interests of the taxpayers who support them and the customers who depend on them. Each individual is responsible for complying with all applicable state and federal laws, and all City policies and standards when using the City's e-mail system. City departments will be held accountable for the actions of individual employees to ensure that conduct meets guidelines established for appropriate use of e-mail.

The city will establish any and all policies necessary and monitor operations to protect employees from creating legal liabilities and negative publicity for themselves and the city. Violations of any policies or standards can result in disciplinary action against the employee in accordance with local, state, and federal law and City administrative rules. Persistent abuse of e-mail by City employees can result in permanent revocation of e-mail privileges for the person or persons involved.
