

Town of Bolton

Computer Usage and Electronic Communications Policy

1. Introduction

The Town of Bolton provides employees with computer equipment and the ability to communicate and receive information using email and the Internet; as well as telephones, cellular phones, pagers, “blackberry” style devices and facsimile machines. The Town utilizes this technology to improve staff efficiency and communication to serve the public more effectively. These resources are the property of the Town of Bolton and should be used for appropriate business purposes only.

2. Purpose

This policy provides guidance on appropriate use and prohibited uses, but is not intended to identify all authorized or prohibited activities by users. All existing state, federal and local laws and Town policies apply while using the Town’s systems, particularly those that govern intellectual property protection, sexual or other harassment, misuse of Town resources, privacy rights or confidentiality.

Use of Bolton’s systems by any employee, contractor, consultant, intern and/or volunteer (“user”) constitutes acceptance of the terms of this policy.

It is the policy of the Town of Bolton that as a condition of providing employees electronic and other communication equipment that procedures and restrictions will be followed. The Town reserves the right, for legitimate business purposes, to monitor, inspect, review and retrieve any information stored on, received by, or transmitted with Town equipment. Users should not have any expectation that their email communications, documents, Internet use history or files stored on Town equipment will remain private or are personal or confidential.

3. Applicability

All Town employees are subject to the provisions of this policy and to others who may from time to time, be authorized to use the Town’s computers, electronic networks and or telecommunications equipment and facilities; excepting law enforcement personnel in the course of their official duties as authorized.

4. Prohibited Activities

The following activities are strictly prohibited:

- ♦Any illegal activity, including, but not limited to, the transmission of copyrighted or trade secret material, or distributing proprietary data or other confidential information of the Town.
- ♦Transmission of material used for commercial promotion, product endorsement or political activity, fundraising or lobbying.

- ♦Attempts to violate the Town of Bolton’s computer system or the computer system of any other municipality, institution, organization, company or individual.
- ♦Software piracy, or the downloading and transferring of software for which the user does not have proper licensing
- ♦Use of the internet to deliberately propagate any virus, worm “Trojan-horse”, trap-door or back-door program code or knowingly disable or overload a computer system, network, or to circumvent any system intended to protect the privacy or security of the town’s systems or another user.
- ♦Use for personal gain such as operating a business or soliciting money, sending chain letters or other “spam”, gambling or engaging in any criminal activity that violates the law.
- ♦Sending emails under another employee’s name without authorization, change any portion of any previously sent email message without authorization, or access another employee’s electronic files when there is no business purpose for doing so and when no supervisory approval has been granted.
- ♦Transmission of obscene, defamatory, or harassing or threatening material and offensive or disruptive messages or images. Among those things which are considered offensive are any messages or images which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comment that is offensively addresses someone’s age, race, sexual orientation, marital status, religious or political beliefs, national origin or disability.
- ♦Sending, voluntarily receiving, or soliciting sexually oriented messages or images, to include sites with inappropriate content. Accessing pornographic sites or sites that have pornographic content is strictly prohibited.
- ♦Using or attempting to use a username or password assigned to another person, or pose as another user without express authorization for business purposes.

5. Authorized Use

- ♦Incidental personal use is permissible within the following restrictions:
- ♦Uses do not consume more than a trivial amount of resources that could be otherwise used for business purposes.
- ♦Use does not interfere with productivity or departmental operations.
- ♦Use does not pre-empt any town business activity.
- ♦Use is during an employee work break or meal period or otherwise authorized by a supervisor.

6. Security

All usernames and passwords are for the exclusive use of the individual to whom they are assigned. The user is personally responsible and accountable for all activities carried out under his/her username, and should take all reasonable precautions to have passwords be kept confidential at all times.

7. Internet Guidelines

Internet browsing capabilities are extended to those personnel requiring access to information on the World Wide Web. Browsing should be limited to Internet sites directly related to the users job function. Personal use of the Internet may be permitted, but users should exercise good judgment.

8. Use of Electronic Mail (Email)

Employees are expected to use their access to email in a responsible and informed way for business matters directly related to the operational activities of the Town. Unsolicited email received from the Internet should never be opened. The user should delete the message immediately. Never open an attachment, especially if you do not know the source. Opening unknown attachments could initiate a virus.

Confidential information should NEVER be sent via email. Employees are not authorized to retrieve or read messages that are not sent to them unless the intended recipient gives express permission. Personal use of email may be permitted, but users should exercise good judgment which ensures the employee is not representing the town in any communication.

9. Public Records

Email messages are determined to be a public record as defined by MGL Chapter 4 Section 7(26). All users shall retain either a printed or digital record of official Town email sent by or received by the Town's systems, in the same manner that other paper records are kept by their department, and in accordance with Record Retention Schedule requirements.

10. Telephone and Facsimile Machine Usage

Telephone, including cellular phones, pagers, and fax machines are provided for business use. Personal telephone calls or fax usage may be permitted, but users should exercise good judgment in their use. Excessive usage for non-business related purposes during work time, usage which incurs additional financial obligations to the town, any misuse such as making or sending harassing or threatening calls or messages is prohibited.

11. Referral to Management Information Systems Personnel

All matters relating to unusual computer or electronic occurrences should be reported immediately to MIS personnel. When something occurs, the user should record information such as steps taken and warnings from the computer to aid in diagnosing the situation.

12. Violations

Any employee who violates this policy or uses the Town's computer system for inappropriate purposes shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or permanent loss of the privilege

to use the Town's systems; and /or disciplinary action up to and including termination from employment. Users may be personally liable for any losses, costs or damages incurred by the Town related to violations of this policy. Illegal use of the Town's systems may result in referral to law enforcement authorities.

Approved by Board of Selectmen 12-2-10