

COMPUTER AND INTERNET

The intention of providing Internet and e-mail access is intended to be for business reasons only. Cedar County encourages the use of the Internet and e-mail, it makes communication more efficient and effective; however, Internet service and e-mail are county property, and their purpose is to facilitate county business. Every staff member has a responsibility to maintain and enhance the County's public image and to use county e-mail and access the Internet in a productive manner. Any improper use of the Internet or e-mail is not acceptable and will not be permitted. To ensure that all employees are responsible, the following policy has been put in place.

I. PURPOSE & DESIGNATION OF INFORMATION OFFICER

The purpose of this policy is to outline Cedar County's policy for usage of Computers, Internet and Electronic Mail. The designated Information Officer is the Data Processing Systems Coordinator, as approved by the Board of Supervisors.

II. USAGE

It is the policy of Cedar County that employees are encouraged to utilize electronic communication as an appropriate means of communication and research to improve the quality and productivity of employees.

Cedar County employees are authorized to access the Internet and e-mail, however, persons having access to these tools shall utilize them in a legal, professional manner.

Electronic equipment provided for the use of Cedar County employees and any work product, messages, or data transmitted through this equipment is the property of Cedar County. Users shall not download or copy data from the County computer system or any County owned computer, disk or other electronic medium onto disks or other media for personal use and no such data, disk or electronic medium shall be removed from County property.

The Iowa Open Records Act (Chapter 22, Code of Iowa) and the Freedom of Information Act, as interpreted by the Courts, indicate that electronic files obtained via the Internet and E-mail communications are public records and subject to inspection by the public in the same manner as paper documents.

All users should be aware that federal copyright laws may protect any information, software, or graphics on the Internet, regardless of whether a copyright notice appears on the work; Cedar County prohibits the reproduction or distribution of copyrighted information. Most software on Cedar County computers and computer systems are copyrighted and licensed to Cedar County for use in accordance with those licensing agreements. Consequently, users may not copy, reproduce or otherwise copy or download any such software or related documentation without prior approval of the Information Officer.

Communications and Internet access should be conducted in a responsible and professional manner reflecting the County's commitment to honest, ethical and non-discriminatory business practice.

Employees, who are terminated, laid off or on extended leave of absence have no right to the contents of their e-mail messages and are not allowed to access the computer system.

Employees are warned that mere deletion of a message or file may not fully eliminate the message from the system.

Cedar County employees are authorized to remove laptop computers and accessories from County facilities to utilize them for County work-related purposes. Laptop computers should be returned to County facilities as soon as possible and practical. Employees should use precautions to safeguard the computer hardware and software.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY

It is recognized that some employees may store information in their computers that is classified as confidential by law, and that information may be protected with passwords unique to individual employees. However, no passwords for screens or files may be added to the County's computer equipment without the approval of the Information Officer. Information which is protected from inspection by the public is subject to inspection by the Department Head or Information Officer.

It is the responsibility of employees having custody of records classified as confidential by law, to appropriately protect that confidentiality.

Employees shall not transmit confidential county information over the Internet except to the minimum extent necessary to perform their job duties. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, bank account numbers, credit card numbers, financial information, social security numbers, and any other confidential information pertaining to the County or employee or client of the County.

This policy shall be interpreted and implemented in a manner that complies with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

IV. GENERAL GUIDELINES

There should be no expectation of privacy of any materials on the County's systems. The County reserves the absolute right to review and disclose all matters sent over the system or placed into its storage.

Use of the Internet shall be limited to county business purposes. Use of the Internet for non-county business purposes is prohibited. The use of electronic mail for non-county business purposes is prohibited, with the exception of the following: emergency public announcements, emergency school announcements, early-out school notifications, and notifications from schools concerning the illness of a child.

Any use of the County system to obtain or send offensive or sexually explicit material, improperly communicate messages that are derogatory, defamatory or obscene are expressly prohibited at any time.

Employees who download information from the Internet are advised to follow procedures in downloading the information to minimize the risk of contracting a computer virus. Downloading of information shall be limited to county business and subject to review by the Department Head or Information Officer. It is required that every computer system have anti-virus software installed and that every diskette or CD received from a third party be scanned before any employee accesses files on it.

Any violation of the Computer and Internet Policy will subject the employee to discipline up to and including termination.

The employee may be held personally responsible for any criminal or civil action brought about as a result of their activities on the Internet or their failure to comply with these policies regarding computer use and the Internet. Users may be held personally liable for damage to the Cedar County computer system or for damages incurred by Cedar County for damages resulting from the user's failure to comply with these policies.

V. USE OF EQUIPMENT

Any use that violates federal, state, or local law or regulation is expressly prohibited. Specifically but not exclusively the following activities are prohibited:

Display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, cartoons, or any transmission or use of communications that contain ethnic slurs, racial epithets, or anything that may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or religious or political beliefs is prohibited.

Knowing or reckless interference with the normal operation of computers, peripherals, or networks is prohibited.

Connecting unauthorized equipment to the network for any purpose is prohibited.

Running or installing games, files, or other software on Cedar County computers is prohibited, if they are not related to work for Cedar County. Using the County network to gain unauthorized access to any computer system is prohibited.

Solicitation is prohibited, whether for charitable, business or personal purposes. Commercial or partisan use is a violation of Iowa law.

VI. NETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOLS

Use of the County's computer systems to access, transmit, store, display or request obscene, pornographic, erotic, profane, racist, sexist or other offensive material (including messages, images, video, or sound) that violates the County's harassment policy or creates an intimidating or hostile work environment is prohibited.

Any use that is deemed to adversely affect the County Government is prohibited.

Use of the County's equipment to transmit any personal opinions about the County or its position on any issue or about any staff member or elected official is strictly prohibited.

There shall be no use of computer equipment or Internet access for personal non-work related purposes, with the exception of the following allowed uses of electronic mail: emergency public announcements, emergency school announcements, early-out school notifications, and notifications from schools concerning the illness of a child.

Users of Computer Systems are further reminded to consider that while they use the County systems, they represent the County just as they would at a county function or in a county vehicle.

Visits to web sites and other Internet use may reflect upon the County and should be undertaken in a serious, business-like manner. Any employee who abuses the privilege of county facilitated access to e-mail or the Internet will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination. If necessary, the County also reserves the right to advise appropriate legal officials of any illegal violations.

This policy is subject to change without prior notice.

APPROVED THIS 7th day of August, 2003.