

# **Town of Kernersville**

## **Electronic Communications Policy**

**BY VIRTUE OF THIS POLICY, ALL SYSTEM USERS ACKNOWLEDGE THE PUBLIC NATURE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE TOWN HAS THE RIGHT TO INSPECT AND REVIEW SUCH COMMUNICATIONS.**

**PURPOSE:** This policy covers the use of all technology resources belonging to the Town of Kernersville. It includes, but is not limited to pagers, radios, all computer systems of any size and function and their attached peripherals, phones, cellular phones, faxes, voice mail systems, e-mail systems, network resources and Internet resources (Communications Systems). The Town provides technology resources to enable Town employees to provide timely and efficient services. This is the primary function of these resources and any activity or action that interferes with this purpose is prohibited. Failure to adhere to this policy places the Town and the individual at risk for legal and financial liabilities, potential embarrassment and other consequences.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Each Department Head shall become thoroughly familiar with the requirements set forth in this policy and to administer this policy consistently within the department and with other departments. The Department Head shall explain this policy within their department and see that it is fully implemented. It is the Department Head's responsibility to ensure their department's users abide by the requirements and guidelines set forth in this and any related documents. Department Heads and Systems Administrator (Finance Director or his designee) has the authority to inspect the contents of any equipment, files, or mail in the normal course of their supervisory responsibilities. Reasons for review include, but are not limited to investigation of network slowdown; system hardware or software problems including software license compliance, general system failure, litigation or potential litigation; reasonable suspicion of a crime or violation of policy; or a need to perform work or provide a service when an employee is not available. All communication system users acknowledge their consent that the Town may, at its discretion, inspect, use or disclose any electronic communications and/or data without further notice for any legitimate business, legal or discretionary purpose. The Town may utilize monitoring software to administer this policy.

**PUBLIC NATURE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:** Electronic communication is a public record like any other public document. Users must understand that any communications created, received or backed up on the Town system may be construed to be public documents and thus may be subject to legal requests for public disclosure. This includes communications that users might think of, incorrectly, as personal and private. Electronic communications may be searched for evidence in any legal proceeding.

**E-MAIL/INTERNET:** Use of the Communications Systems by employees for personal use must be restricted to occasional use that does not interfere with the conduct of Town business. Personal use should be limited to personal time (breaks, after hours) and personal use of the Internet and e-mail on Town time must be kept to a minimum. Supervisors are expected to monitor the extent of personal use of these assets during regular working hours.

Any business or personal use of the Internet or e-mail by a Town employee shall clearly and accurately identify the employee. Anonymous or pseudonymous use is prohibited.

E-mail is considered an official form of communication between departments and between employees. Computer users are required to check for the receipt of e-mail messages each working day.

The following uses of the Town's Communications Systems are strictly prohibited:

- Use of the Communications Systems to send chain letters.
- Use of the Communications Systems to knowingly send copies of documents in violation of copyright laws.
- Use of the Communications Systems to compromise the integrity of the town and its business in any way.
- Use of the Communications Systems to send messages containing offensive, abusive, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, or other language inappropriate for the operation of the Town.
- Use of the Communications Systems to send messages that violate any policy of the Town including the Town's Policy Against Harassment. Such messages include, but are not limited to, messages that contain sexual implications, racial slurs, or other comment that offensively addresses someone's age, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin or disability.
- Use of the Communications Systems for the advertisement of personal business.
- Intentionally viewing, downloading and/or transmitting materials (other than that required for police business) that involve the use of obscene language, images, jokes, sexually explicit materials or messages that abuse or belittle any person, group or classification of individuals is strictly prohibited.
- Use of the Communication System to distribute personnel information unless it is an authorized Human Resource function that includes but is not limited to salary, performance reviews, complaints, grievances, misconduct, disciplinary information, medical records or related information.
- Installation of software without prior authorization from the Systems Administrator.

- Employees shall not permit unauthorized persons to use the Town's electronic Communication System.
- Use of the Internet to purchase equipment or supplies with the submission of a Town credit card number is strictly prohibited. Purchases made by purchase orders must have prior approval by Department Head.
- Installation of Software by third-party software vendors unless authorized by the Systems Administrator.

**SECURITY:** All electronic communications are the property of the Town, are subject to monitoring and therefore not considered private. The Town will disclose any electronic mail message as required by appropriate law or regulation. The Town shall promptly access electronic communication data:

- When a user leaves the employ of the Town for any reason. User's mail will be accessed for the purpose of saving those messages that pertain to Town business. These files may be subject to transfer to another user if necessary to conduct Town business. The employee's Town e-mail service will be discontinued.
- When necessary to investigate a possible violation of a Town policy or a breach of the security of the Communications Systems.
- In the event there is reasonable suspicion a user has committed or is committing any crime.

**TELEPHONES:** The telephone system is intended primarily to accomplish the work of the Town. Providing services to internal and external customers is always the first priority. Personal use should be limited in accordance with the provisions of Internet and e-mail use.

The Town will deem personal use excessive if it prevents the employee from handling customer inquiries, complaints and requests for service in a timely manner or if it interferes with employees accomplishing their job responsibilities. All personal toll calls are to be reimbursed to the Town.

**PRINTERS, COPIERS AND FAXES:** Photocopy machines, printers and fax machines shall be used for the transaction of Town business. Any personal use must be pre-approved by the Department Head and reimbursement for personal use should be arranged with the Department Head prior to use. Unauthorized copying of copyrighted material is strictly prohibited.

**VIOLATIONS:** It is the user's responsibility to read and abide by topics set forth in this document. If any employee violates any of the provisions of this policy, or a supervisor or department head who knowingly permits a violation of this policy, the employee, supervisor or Department Head will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, as provided in the Personnel Policy.

This policy is issued by direction of the Town Manager on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Randy E. McCaslin, Town Manager

Revised: 01/18/02

**BY VIRTUE OF THIS POLICY, ALL SYSTEM USERS ACKNOWLEDGE THE PUBLIC NATURE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE TOWN HAS THE RIGHT TO INSPECT AND REVIEW SUCH COMMUNICATIONS.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge that I have read and received a copy of the Town of Kernersville Electronic Communications Policy. I fully understand the terms of this policy and agree to abide by them. I realize that the Town's security software may record for management use the internet address of any site that I visit and keep a record of any network activity in which I transmit or receive any kind of file. I acknowledge that any message I send or receive will be recorded and stored in an archive file for management use. I know that any violation of this policy could lead to disciplinary action, dismissal, or even criminal prosecution.

Employee's Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_