

Internet and Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy

Western Kentucky University

Policy Source:

This policy has been adopted from the Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) policy number CIO-060, *Internet and Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy* with an effective date of 5/15/96 and a revision date of 11/1/2005.

Policy Maintenance:

This Enterprise Policy has been approved by the Enterprise Architecture and Standards Committee. The Commonwealth's Office for Technology (COT), Office of Infrastructure Services and Office of Policy and Customer Relations share the responsibility for the maintenance of this policy. Agencies may choose to add to this policy, in order to enforce more restrictive policies as appropriate. Western Kentucky University chooses to implement the COT policy with some modifications. Additional policies relative to the use of Western's computer resources are contained in the university's Computing Ethics Policy.

Responsibility for Compliance:

Each agency is responsible for assuring that employees within their organizational authority have been made aware of the provisions of this policy, that compliance by the employee is expected, and that intentional, inappropriate use of **E-mail resources** may result in disciplinary action pursuant to KRS 18A up to and including dismissal.

Policy:

The Commonwealth's Office for Technology (COT) furnishes the communications backbone for users of the Kentucky Information Highway (KIH). The KIH is an enterprise-shared resource and acceptable practices and common guidelines must govern its use. This Acceptable Use Policy represents a set of guidelines to be followed when using the KIH or any other network that is used as a result of its KIH connection, including Internet and E-mail.

In compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth and the guidelines provided herein, employees of the Commonwealth of Kentucky are encouraged to use the Internet and E-mail to their fullest potential to further the State's mission, to provide service of the highest quality to its citizens, to discover new ways to use resources to enhance service, and to promote staff development. State employees should use the Internet and E-mail, when appropriate, to accomplish job responsibilities more effectively and to enrich their performance skills. The Internet and E-mail afford unprecedented

opportunities for conducting research and disseminating (publishing) job-related information.

The acceptable use of Internet and E-mail represents the proper management of a state business resource. The ability to connect with a specific Internet site does not in itself imply that an employee is permitted to visit that site. Supervisors should work with employees to determine the appropriateness of using the Internet and E-mail for professional activities and career development during working hours, while ensuring that employees do not violate the general provisions which prohibit using the Internet and E-mail for personal gain.

Supervisors are encouraged to identify Internet and E-mail training needs and resources, to encourage use of the Internet and E-mail to improve job performance, to support staff attendance at training sessions, and to permit use of official time for maintaining skills, as appropriate.

This policy applies when the Commonwealth's Internet and E-mail resources are being used by employees, regardless of the time of day, location or method of access. Employees shall have no expectation of privacy associated with E-mail transmissions and the information they publish/store on the Internet using the Commonwealth's resources.

Excessive personal use of the Commonwealth's E-mail or Internet resource shall lead to loss of the privilege to use them.

Employee Responsibilities:

- State employees have an obligation to use their access to the Internet and E-mail in a responsible and informed way, conforming to network etiquette, customs, courtesies, and any or all applicable laws or regulation.
- As with other forms of publications, copyright restrictions/regulations shall be observed.
- Employees shall be aware that their conduct or information they publish could reflect on the reputation of the Commonwealth. Therefore, professionalism in all communications is of the utmost importance.
- Employees shall represent themselves, their agency or any other state agency accurately and honestly through electronic information or service content.

Agency Responsibilities:

- E-Mail should be used for "appropriate business use" only. This policy recognizes the specific definition of appropriate business use may differ among agencies based on their mission and functions. Therefore, each agency should

define appropriate business use and make certain employees are informed. Agencies who choose to use E-mail to transmit highly sensitive or confidential information should be aware of the potential risks of sending unsecured transmissions. E-mails of this nature should, at a minimum, contain a confidentiality statement.

- Agencies are responsible for the content of their published information and for the actions of their employees.
- Any commercial use of Internet connections by agencies must be approved by COT to make certain it does not violate the terms of COT's agreement with the Commonwealth's Internet provider. No reselling of access is allowed.
- Agencies shall not accept commercial banner ads or vendor-hosted website advertising for which the agency receives compensation. As a general practice, state agencies should avoid endorsing or promoting a specific product or company from agency websites.

Unacceptable Uses:

Since the Internet constitutes an uncensored worldwide network of networks, and E-mail provides for peer-to-peer communications between participants, they also have great potential for misuse.

Use of Commonwealth of Kentucky Internet and E-mail resources is a privilege that may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct. Any abuse of acceptable use policies may result in revocation of access, notification of agency management, and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Using the Internet and E-mail for personal gain or personal business activities in a commercial connotation such as buying or selling of commodities or services with a profit motive.
- Engaging in illegal activities or using the Internet for any illegal purposes, including initiating or receiving communications that violate any laws and regulations, including KRS 434.840-434.860 (Unlawful Access to a Computer) and KRS 512.020 (Criminal Damage to Property Law). This includes malicious use, spreading of viruses, and hacking. Hacking means gaining or attempting to gain the unauthorized access to any computers, computer networks, databases, data or electronically stored information.
- Transmitting statements, language, images or other materials that are reasonably likely to be perceived as offensive or disparaging of others based on race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.

- Using abusive, harassing, or objectionable language in either public or private messages.
- Knowingly visiting pornographic or illegal sites, disseminating, soliciting or storing sexually oriented messages or images.
- Misrepresenting, obscuring, suppressing, or replacing a user's identity on the Internet or E-mail. This includes the use of false or misleading subject headers and presentation of information in the distribution of E-mail.
- Sending or forwarding chain letters.
- Distributing or forwarding unsolicited commercial E-mail.
- Soliciting money for religious or political causes, or advocating religious or political opinions.
- Using official dissemination tools to distribute personal information to include any information that constitutes an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy as defined in the Kentucky Open Records Act, KRS 61.870.
- Copying, disseminating or printing copyrighted materials (including articles, images, games, or other software) in violation of copyright laws.
- Other non-business related activities that will cause congestion, disruption of networks or systems including, but not limited to, Internet games, online gaming, unnecessary Listserve subscriptions and E-mail attachments, and chat rooms, such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC), I SeeK You ((ICQ), AOL Instant Messenger and similar computer conferencing chat rooms on the Internet.

Penalties for Unacceptable Use:

Unacceptable use of the University-provided E-mail system could result in a letter of warning or loss of University-provided e-mail capability. Serious and repeated violations could result in dismissal.

Procedure for Initiating an Unacceptable Use Charge and Employee Recourse:

Any Western employee may institute a charge of employee misuse of the university's E-mail resources to the University's General Counsel. The General Counsel will review the charge in concert with the Vice President for Information Technology and will make a determination, which will be final.

Revised 6/20/07 per WKU internal audit recommendations.