

Electronic Communications, Email and Internet Usage Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and procedures for the use of electronic communication and information transmitted by, from or stored within the Longview Housing Authority's systems.

General

Any and all electronic communication and information transmitted by, from or stored within the LHA's systems are the property of the company and are to be used for company-related purposes. This includes but is not limited to voice mail, e-mail, computer programs, word processing and the Internet, facsimile, scanners, or copy machines.

Employees will be issued computers, voicemail, networkability, internet access, and access to networked programs by their Supervisors as required to perform the duties of their positions. Unauthorized access to the information systems of the agency is prohibited. Hardware must be installed with prudent safeguards to protect personal information of clients stored by the LHA.

Employees are prohibited from using a code, accessing a file or retrieving any stored communication unless authorized to do so or cleared for access from a Supervisor or the Executive Director.

Personal Use

Employees may use this equipment for incidental, reasonable, lawful personal reasons so long as the personal use is done not during work hours and does not impact the integrity or use of these systems. Employees should be aware that there is no confidentiality with respect to personal use of these systems and that both business and personal use and documents stored or transmitted are the property of the LHA and may be accessed and monitored from time to time.

Access to Software/Hardware/Passwords

All passwords, codes, software or hardware purchased by and authorized by the LHA is the property of the LHA. Employees must safeguard their passwords and not share them with other employees. Passwords and access codes must be on file with the Supervisor and the HR Department at all times and should not be construed as creating an expectation of privacy.

Only company authorized software or hardware may be used on the LHA's systems or network. Employees should use caution in opening any file, email, attachment or link as these may expose the agency's network to considerable damage from viruses, worms or spyware. Unauthorized loading of programs, games, visual graphics, violation of copyrights, or use of other unauthorized technology can result in discipline including possible financial reimbursement for damages up to and including termination of employment.

Internet Usage

Internet usage within the LHA shall be relevant to the job which the user is expected to perform. The Internet provides a valuable tool for research, interaction, communication and delivery of services between LHA and its vendors, peer organizations, partners and participants. It is a very public resource and any access should be considered public and potentially accessible to both the public and LHA management staff. It is technically possible to monitor which Internet resources and sites are visited by any user, and also how much time is spent here. No offensive, harassing, fraudulent, defamatory, or illegal information should be accessed using LHA's equipment or system. Downloading or accessing any information or accessing sites from the Internet of an inappropriate or salacious nature is prohibited. Such conduct or any violation of this policy may subject an employee to discipline up to and including termination of employment. It is possible to accidentally venture into materials which you or others may find personally offensive or which violates laws. If that occurs, you are expected to immediately back out of such a site and return to acceptable uses of the Internet per this policy.

Uploading of information using LHA systems should be pre-approved by a Supervisor. When in doubt, consult our IT contractor regarding safeguarding LHA systems.

Email Usage

Email has revolutionized business communications. It can be a great asset and a cost effective way to exchange essential information. It can also be a huge time waster and create the "tyranny of the urgent" for otherwise effective workers. To facilitate efficient and effective business use of email, LHA staff shall observe the following email conventions:

- 1) Communication of confidential or proprietary information via workplace systems is prohibited. This would include, but not be limited to: social security numbers, personal information regarding clients with their names or other identifying information, medical information, pictures of clients or staff without their express written permission to distribute, or business account numbers.
- 2) Documents or communications via company systems are business records and, as such, may be subject to review by third parties, particularly in relation to litigation. These files may exist in storage on drives on an employee's computer, but may also be copied to the backup computer and tapes and available long after an employee has deleted them from their computer.
- 3) Neither business nor personal use should involve material or comments that might be viewed as being unprofessional, harassing, discriminatory, or suggestive. Harassment is just as illegal if it occurs electronically rather than face to face.
- 4) **Public Access:** The LHA will monitor communications and stored emails and files for the purpose of ensuring that the practices at the agency follow our policies, that the LHA's systems are being safely used, and to prevent employee misconduct. Employees should have no expectation of personal privacy when using company-owned systems, even if checking personal email accounts from company equipment. The public is able to monitor emails that are exchanged across the system as well. Also, public information laws allow the public to request copies of emails sent on LHA systems. Remember to