

SCOTLAND COUNTY

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

BY VIRTUE OF THIS POLICY, ALL COUNTY EMPLOYEES ACKNOWLEDGE THE PUBLIC NATURE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND UNDERSTAND THAT SCOTLAND COUNTY HAS THE RIGHT TO INSPECT AND REVIEW SUCH COMMUNICATIONS.

PURPOSE: This policy covers the use of all technology resources belonging to the Scotland County. It includes, but is not limited to pagers, radios, all computer systems of any size and function and their attached peripherals, tablets, phones, cellular phones, faxes, voice mail systems, e-mail systems, network resources and Internet resources. Scotland County provides these technology resources to enable county employees to provide timely and efficient services. Providing timely, efficient and accurate information is the primary functions of these automated resources and any activity or action that interferes with this purpose is prohibited. Failure to adhere to this policy places the individual at risk for legal liabilities, potential embarrassment and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

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 IT personnel have 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 County 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 County 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 County 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. County employees are advised that they have no privacy rights and that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy when using any avenue of County

technology or communication systems. Because of the need to protect the County's network, IT management will within its ability, protect the confidentiality of information stored on any network, computer, or communications device belonging to Scotland County. Scotland County's users should be aware that the data they create on County technology or communications systems remains the property of Scotland County and is not private (unless the data is personal health information covered by HIPAA or other personnel information protected by other privacy laws) and usually can be recovered even though deleted by the user. Furthermore, information that is stored on County technology or sent via e-mail may be subject to disclosure pursuant to the North Carolina Public Records Law. All technology resources and all information transmitted by, received from and stored on Scotland County systems are the property of Scotland County and as such, are subject to inspection and monitoring. 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 County business. Personal use should be limited to personal time (breaks) and personal use of the Internet and e-mail should be minimal. Supervisors, at best, should 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 County 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. County employees should have no expectation of privacy in anything they store, send or receive via the county's e-mail system. Scotland County may monitor messages without prior notice.

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

- Use of the Communications Systems to send chain letters.
- Use of the Communications Systems to compromise the integrity of Scotland County 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 Scotland County.
- Use of the Communications Systems to send messages that violate any policy of the County including the County's Unlawful Workplace 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 or downloading of software from outside vendors or the Internet without prior authorization from IT personnel.
- Employees shall not permit unauthorized persons to use the County electronic Network/Communication System.
- Installation of Software through any method unless authorized by IT personnel. This includes software by third-party vendors, as well as shareware, freeware, personal software and Internet distributed programs.
- Use of the computer to play any games.

SECURITY: Each employee is responsible for all actions taken while using his/her user profile or password. Passwords should be kept confidential and not shared. Only the director of the IT department can authorize exceptions to this policy.

Any file, program, or document received on any media, through the Internet or through file transfer must be checked for viruses immediately. **User should be cautious when receiving an email message you were not expecting containing an attachment. It should not be opened if you have any doubt about the type of file, content or sender. This is to prevent viruses from infecting the County's entire network. Each individual employee is responsible for the prevention of the spread of viruses.**

Scotland County has the right, but not the duty, to monitor any and all aspects of the County's electronic technology resources. Failure to monitor in any specific situation does not constitute a waiver of the County's right to monitor. For security and network maintenance purposes, authorized individuals within Scotland County's Information Technology Department may monitor equipment, systems and network traffic at any time. This traffic includes social sites, video sites, streaming sites such as video and music. At the written request of a department manager or one of their respective employees, or upon authorization by the County Manager or designee, the Scotland County IT Department has the authority to access without notice: data, e-mail and voice-mail boxes, and other employer provided electronic storage systems. Scotland County reserves the right for business and security purposes to audit and monitor the information on all systems, electronic mail and information stored on computer systems or media,

without advance notice. The County reserves the right to monitor all employee usage to ensure proper working order, appropriate use by employees, the security of Scotland County data, and to retrieve the contents of any employee communication in these systems. This could include investigation of theft, unauthorized disclosure of confidential business or proprietary information, personal abuse of the system or monitoring workflow and productivity. The County may access user files, including archived material of present and former employees without the user's consent for any purpose related to maintaining the integrity of the network, or the rights of Scotland County or other users to ensure compliance with the County's *Electronic Communications Policy*.

The County shall promptly access electronic communication data:

- When a user leaves the employ of Scotland County for any reason. **User's access to County network will be deleted by IT staff immediately upon notice of user's departure from County as an employee.** User's mail/voice mail will be accessed for the purpose of saving those messages that pertain to County business. These files may be subject to transfer to another user if necessary to conduct County business.
- When necessary to investigate a possible violation of County 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.

MEDIA PROTECTION: Due to the importance of source data and stored data, all media must be protected. The following is a list of minimal steps to protect County media.

- All media should be kept in a locked location when not in use.
- Media should be kept away from all heat sources, direct sunlight and any sources of extreme cold.
- Media should be stored in their protective cases.
- Never touch the magnetic surface of storage media or the protective sliding shields.
- Optical disks, CD & DVD, should be kept clean of smudges, and the both sides must be protected from scratches.
- Never place any clip on any storage media. If media must be attached to a document, place the media in an envelope and attach the envelope.

- Keep all media away from magnets or equipment that may produce magnetic fields. These include magnetic paper clip holders, speakers, electric pencil sharpeners, etc.
- All storage media should be kept away from liquids

TELEPHONES: The telephone system is intended primarily to accomplish the work of Scotland County. 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 County will deem personal use excessive if it prevents the employee from managing customer inquiries, complaints and requests for service in a timely manner or if it interferes with the employee's accomplishing her/his job responsibilities. Personal use of the County's long distance service is prohibited. Violations will be subject to disciplinary actions as provided in the Personnel Policy.

CELLULAR PHONES: Cellular phones are to be used to conduct County business only. If it becomes necessary to use a County issued cellular phone for an urgent personal need, arrangements for reimbursement must be made to the County within 10 business days of presentment of the bill to the employee.

Personal use is only allowable in cases where there is no alternative form of communication and the need for personal use is immediate and compelling. Any personal calls must be reported to your supervisor.

Using a cellular phone while driving is discouraged. Only necessary calls should be made while driving and the calls should be kept brief. No calls should be made or received while driving conditions are hazardous, or while traffic is heavy. If you must place or answer a call while driving, it is advised that you pull off of the road and park. In all cases, adherence to current laws regarding cell phone use and distracted driving will prevail. These precautions are to protect you, the user, who is a valuable asset to Scotland County as an employee.

Department managers are responsible for reviewing cell phone bills for their staff on a monthly basis.

Employees who abuse this policy will be subject to disciplinary action. Employees who do not make or fail to meet the arrangements to reimburse the County for personal use will be subject to garnishment of their payroll.

PRINTERS, COPIERS AND FAXES: Photocopy machines, printers and fax machines shall be used for the transaction of County 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 Finance Officer/Assistant County Manager on the 30th day of June 2004, amended March 2010 amended/updated July 2021.
