

Category: 100 – GENERAL/ADMINISTRATIVE

Number: 131

Subject: **INTERNET POLICY**

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish guidelines for access and use of the Internet. This includes Internet protocols, the World Wide Web (WWW), and the downloading of files, E-mail and programs from the Internet.
2. **AUTHORITY:** St. Clair County Board of Commissioners. Changes to this policy will be made and approved by the Board of Commissioners on changes in technology and business practice.
3. **APPLICATION:** This policy applies to all Departments, Elected Officials and Agencies of St. Clair County who use County-provided access to the Internet, regardless of the user's location when accessing the network.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** St. Clair County Information Services Director shall be responsible for the implementation and oversight of this policy.
5. **DEFINITION(S):** None
6. **POLICY:** The County encourages the use of the Internet as a tool to facilitate and improve job functions. Within the policies and procedures set forth herein, County personnel are permitted to use the Internet for research, education and communications, strictly for County-related business on County time, and conducted in keeping with the County's standards of professionalism. Personal use of the network, e-mail and Internet will be regulated at the Department level.
  - 6.1 Appropriate use of the Internet
    - 6.1.1 Copyright laws regarding protected commercial software or intellectual property shall be honored.
    - 6.1.2 Use of the Internet should be minimized so that unnecessary network traffic will not interfere with others in using this shared network resource. This includes the use of the Internet for the storage of files for purposes such as backup.
    - 6.1.3 Internet access shall be treated as a shared resource. Unless the connection to the Internet is actively being used, it should be closed to permit others access.
    - 6.1.4 If it is necessary to download applications or programs from the Internet, users must contact the Director of Information Services for instructions on downloading procedures and authorization to proceed in order to prevent infection of the County's local network by computer viruses.

## 6.2 Prohibited uses of the Internet

- 6.2.1 Any unlawful purposes, including unauthorized use of a protected/secured resource of any department of the County.
- 6.2.2 The transmission of unprofessional communications not associated with normal work responsibilities or using County resources for unsolicited advertising for personal gain.
- 6.2.3 Browsing the Internet, posting messages on bulletin boards, or participating in chat rooms, except for County related business.
- 6.2.4 Downloading of software or programs except by Information Services staff or their designees to prevent computer viruses from being transmitted throughout the County's network system.
- 6.2.5 Additional prohibited uses of the Internet shall include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a) Any illegal activity
  - b) Threats
  - c) Slander/Libel
  - d) Defamation
  - e) Obscene, suggestive or offensive graphic images or messages
  - f) Political endorsements
  - g) Commercial activities
  - h) Use of software not required for County business including games or other entertainment software
  - i) Purchasing of items not intended for County-related business through the Internet.
  - j) The passing along of generally comical information (jokes)

## 6.3 Violations and Oversight

- 6.3.1 Any transmission through the County's Internet Gateway **may** be monitored for system integrity and maintenance in order to prevent fraud, abuse and unlawful usage. All persons using the County Internet gateway shall consent to the monitoring of all data, files, messages and other transmissions passing through the gateway, both outgoing and incoming.
- 6.3.2 Policy violations shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by department heads and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## 6.4 Access to the Internet

- 6.4.1 All employees desiring access to the County's Internet gateway must receive prior written approval from their immediate supervisor. Requests shall be directed to Information Services with an acknowledgement signed by the employee that he/she has read and agrees to abide by this policy. The acknowledgement shall state that the employee consents to have her/his transmissions through the County's Internet gateway monitored by County staff and that he/she shall agree to waive all state and federal legal privacy regulations as a condition of access to the County's Internet gateway. A sample acknowledgement statement as well as an approved statement is included as an attachment to this policy.

- 6.4.2 Every device or “host” connecting to the Internet must have a unique identifier and approved domain name as assigned by the Information Services Office of the County. Information Services staff will coordinate the assignment and installation of all appropriate programs.
- 6.4.3 The County holds the right to block access to any Internet sites which are determined to be non-applicable for County-related business.

6.5 Department Responsibilities

- 6.5.1 As with other County resources, the use of the Internet is restricted to County-related business on County time. Since the County’s Internet connection service provides both full and E-mail only access, each department’s own operating procedures with emphasis on addressing security concerns will be adhered to.
- 6.5.2 Information Services staff shall coordinate enhancements of Internet services (including hardware and software modifications).
- 6.5.3 Implementation strategies to enhance effective Internet use will also include user training in the appropriate and efficient use of this network resource. Training will be provided by the County’s Information Services department. Topics will include connection and use of navigation tools.

6.6 Confidentiality and Privacy

- 6.6.1 Individuals using County-provided Internet accounts are required to consent to the County monitoring of all Internet transmissions and data/message storage. These individuals shall also waive all rights to privacy as a condition of use including any rights set forth in state and federal legal privacy regulations.
- 6.6.2 County personnel should be aware that access to Internet sites from County computers leaves an electronic trail which may be traced back to a County computer.

6.7 E-mail

- 6.7.1 There shall be no implication of privacy with regards to E-mail messages. The content of distributed E-mail and maintenance of user’s E-mail box is the user’s responsibility. E-mail messages may be subject to public disclosure under the Public Records Act or litigation. In-progress work which is not subject to public disclosure should be clearly marked in the body of the document as “private/confidential” before it is distributed via E-mail.
- 6.7.2 The County reserves the right to monitor the E-mail system for any reason. Employees should be aware that the deletion of a message or file may not fully eliminate the message from the system.
- 6.7.3 As with all County resources, any E-mail received via a County-provided Internet access shall be for County-related business and employees shall only reveal their e-mail addresses to business related parties.
- 6.7.4 Additional prohibited uses of the E-mail shall include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a) Any illegal activity
  - b) Threats

- c) Slander/Libel
- d) Defamation
- e) Obscene, suggestive or offensive graphic images or messages
- f) Political endorsements
- g) Commercial activities
- h) Use of software not required for County business including games or other entertainment software
- i) Purchasing of items not intended for County-related business through the E-mail
- j) The passing along of generally comical information (jokes)

## 6.8 Security Implications

6.8.1 The County's system administrators understand that additional data security threats exist when a system is connected to the Internet. To minimize the risk of connecting to outside networks, the County has set up "fire walls". The "fire walls" will limit access by outside networks and users to County computer host sites that do not store sensitive material, thus keeping "vital" machines isolated. (See footnote 1)

## 6.9 Bulletin Boards, USENET News Groups, LISTSERVS

6.9.1 Bulletin Boards, USENET news groups and LISTSERVS provide a mechanism for the exchange of information, allow topic-specific research and enable communication with a larger, topic-specific audience with shared interests. access to and use of this type of protocol by staff is subject to the "Appropriate Use" policy outlined under Section III of this policy.

## 6.10 Connectivity and Network Protocols

6.10.1 The Information Services Department shall be responsible for developing in-house architectures that allow for sharing data, department applications, networks and host computers. Information Services shall also provide support for the acquisition of products that:

- a. Support Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) standards for internal networks and,
- b. Conform to TCP/IP standards for interagency communications.

## 6.11 Virus Checking Software

6.11.1 It is recognized that there are a number of virus checking software programs available. However, not all virus checking software serve the same function or contain updated information to review current viruses. Therefore, any virus-checking program must be reviewed by the Information Services staff prior to use.

- (1) The issue of how to protect the Internet system from the spread of viruses resulting from access to work related news groups is under discussion. Any files downloaded from the Internet should be run through virus checks before loading on the user's computer.

7. **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:** The Information Services Director, in conjunction with Department Heads and Elected Officials, shall be responsible for developing and implementing administrative terms or procedures for this policy.
  
8. **ADMINISTRATOR/CONTROLLERS LEGAL COUNSEL REVIEW:** The Administrator/Controller has determined that this policy as submitted to the Board of Commissioners contains the necessary substance in order to carry out the purpose of the policy. The County Corporation Counsel has determined that this policy as submitted contains content that appears to be legal activities of the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners.

**ADOPTED: April 26, 2000**

**St. Clair County**

**Internet Policy**

**Individual User**

**Acceptable Use Agreement Release Form**

I have read, understand and agree to abide by the conditions and rules as stated in St. Clair County's Internet Policy. I further understand that any violations of the conditions and rules are a violation of St. Clair County policy and may constitute criminal offense(s). Should I commit any violation of the Internet Policy, my access privileges may be revoked, disciplinary action(s) may be taken and/or appropriate legal action(s) initiated.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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