

## **INTERNET POLICY**

The Internet is a world-wide collection of interconnected networks. Electronic tools associated with Internet access, such as electronic mail (E-mail) and the World Wide Web (WWW), help county employees streamline information access and conduct business. These tools are used to facilitate inter-agency communication and information processing. There are many parallels between the new electronic information tools and older technologies used for similar purposes (for example, telephones and written correspondence). As such, the same general concepts of professionalism and appropriate use of publicly owned or publicly provided resources apply.

Randolph County provides access to the vast information resources of the Internet to help employees do their jobs faster and more effectively. The facilities to provide that access represent a considerable commitment of County resources for telecommunications, networking, software, storage, etc. These Internet usage procedures are designed to help employees understand our expectations for the use of those resources in the particular conditions of the Internet, and to help them use those resources wisely.

Randolph County's philosophy, first and foremost, is that the Internet is a business tool provided at significant cost. Employees are expected to use Internet access for business-related purposes, i.e., to communicate with vendors, federal agencies, state agencies, etc., to research relevant topics and obtain useful business information. Employees should conduct themselves honestly and appropriately on the Internet, respecting the copyrights, software licensing rules, property rights, privacy and rights of others, as in any other business dealings. All existing County policies apply to conduct on the Internet, especially those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, misuse of County resources, sexual harassment, information and data security, and confidentiality. Randolph County's facilities and computing resources must not be used knowingly to violate the laws and regulations of the United States or any other nation, or the laws and regulations of any state, city, province or other local jurisdiction in any way. Randolph County will limit Internet access to those employees who demonstrate a legitimate business need.

Unnecessary or unauthorized Internet usage causes network and server congestion. It slows other users, takes away from work time, and consumes

information processing resources. Unlawful Internet usage may also garner negative publicity and expose the County to significant legal liabilities, therefore Randolph County must impose limits on Internet usage and provide feedback for network control.

In accordance, County employees are expected to use the Internet and information processing resources responsibly and professionally at all times and shall make no intentional use of these services in an illegal, malicious, offensive, or obscene manner. The display of any kind of sexually explicit image or document on any County system is a violation of our policy on sexual harassment. In addition, sexually explicit material shall not be archived, stored, distributed, edited, downloaded, or recorded using County network or computing resources.

The open connection afforded by Internet access underscores the need for heightened awareness among county employees regarding prudent behavior as it pertains to information dissemination and access. Each employee using the Internet facilities of Randolph County shall identify himself or herself honestly, accurately and completely (including one's affiliation and function where requested) when participating in news groups or when setting up accounts on outside computer systems. Encryption should be used to transmit confidential information to authorized personnel only. Employees releasing protected information to unauthorized sources will be subject to all penalties under the County's policies, procedures, State and Federal laws, County ordinances, etc. Only those employees or officials who are duly authorized to speak to the media or in public gatherings on behalf of Randolph County may speak/write in the name of Randolph County. Other employees may participate in news groups in the course of business when relevant to their duties, but they do so as individuals speaking only for themselves. Where an individual participant is identified as an employee or agent of Randolph County, the employee must refrain from any unauthorized statement, endorsement, or appearance of endorsement by Randolph County of any product, service, or subject. Only those department heads, elected officials, and appointed supervisors who are authorized to speak to the media or in public gatherings on behalf of Randolph County may grant authority to employees to speak on behalf of the County.

To further provide for network control, Randolph County shall purchase and install software and systems that can monitor, record, or block any Internet

usage. As an employer, Randolph County reserves the right to review file and data transmissions, including e-mail, to inspect its computer resources, and to block any inappropriate, offensive, or sexually explicit sites. No employee should have any expectation of privacy as to his or her Internet usage.

No employee shall attempt to disable, defeat, overload, or circumvent any County security facility or any other Computer System or Network. No employee may use the County's Internet facilities to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse, or trap-door program code.

**An Internet user can be held accountable for any breaches of confidentiality or security.**

To guard against destructive infiltration of County systems, employees with Internet access may download only software with direct business use, and must arrange to have such software properly licensed and registered. Downloaded software must be used only under the terms of its license. No employee may use County facilities knowingly to download or distribute pirated software or data. All software, files, documents, etc. downloaded via the Internet become the property of Randolph County and must be scanned for viruses using standard virus detection utilities. Employees with Internet access may not use County Internet facilities to download entertainment software or games, to play games against opponents over the Internet, or to use real-time audio for their personal pleasure. Employees may not use County Internet facilities to download images or videos unless there is an explicit business-related use for the material. Entertainment software, games, unnecessary graphics, and real-time audio waste valuable County network bandwidth resources.

While personal use of Internet resources is regulated and monitored by the County, reasonable personal use by employees is not expressly forbidden. County employees may make reasonable personal use of County owned or provided Internet resources as long as:

1. The direct measurable cost to the County or its citizens is none or is negligible;
2. There is no negative impact on employee performance of duties;
3. Employees shall reimburse the County if costs are incurred.

**Violation of this policy is grounds for dismissal and when applicable, criminal prosecution.**

All Randolph County employees granted Internet access will be provided with a written copy of this policy and are required to sign the following statement:

**“I have received a written copy of Randolph County’s Internet usage policy and procedures. I fully understand the terms of the policy and procedures. I agree to abide by them. I realize that Randolph County’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 may be recorded and stored in an archive file for management use. I know that any violation of this policy could lead to dismissal or even criminal prosecution.”**

Although direct connection to the Internet offers tremendous benefits, it can also open the door to significant risks to data and systems if appropriate security measures are not taken. This may mean preventing machines with sensitive data or applications from connecting to the Internet entirely, or it may mean that certain Internet features like file transfers may not be allowed. The overriding principle is that security is to be everyone’s first concern.

In order to provide such security, a committee is hereby created that shall oversee this policy and any associated information services, protection procedures, electronic records, or data network policies.

**Purpose and Composition of the Randolph County Information Services Policy Committee:**

**Authority & Membership:**

This committee is created and authorized by the Randolph County Board of Commissioners and is empowered to carry out the purpose and duties listed below. Membership shall consist of County Manager, Staff Attorney, Information Services Director, Personnel Director and a County Commissioner.

## Purpose & Duties:

The purpose of this committee is to establish and enforce procedures as related to and consistent with this Internet Policy. The committee will also be responsible for establishing procedures and / or policies dealing with technology, information systems, and electronic records as needed.

Procedures to be developed include but are not limited to the following:

- Establishing e-mail and Internet protocols
- Establishing network and system security protocols
- Establishing methods of ensuring data integrity
- Establishing guidelines and standards for Web site development, systems automation, and technological resource utilization
- Establishing enforcement responsibility and procedures
- Defining avenues of appeal for enforcement decisions
- Developing a Strategic Technology Plan that promotes the coordination of technological advancement efforts between department and agencies.
- Defining other procedures as may be deemed necessary to manage, secure, enforce, update, or monitor Internet access and other information processing resources