

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Idaho State Office  
1387 South Vinnell Way  
Boise, Idaho 83709-1657

In Reply Refer To:  
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June 2, 2005

EMS  
Instruction Memorandum No. ID-2005-072  
Expires: 09/30/06

To: All Employees

From: State Director

Subject: Voice Mail and Answering Machine Procedures

**Program Area:** Telephone Management

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) forwards Washington Office IM No. 2005-144 and provides additional guidance for the use of voice mail and answering machines.

**Policy/Action:** Use of telephone equipment that includes voice mail or answering machine capabilities is an effective method of providing information to callers and recording incoming calls when you are unavailable to answer your telephone. However, it is extremely important that these technologies are properly and efficiently used to provide quality service to callers. Effective immediately, the following procedures will be used in all offices.

The “main” (normally the published) office telephone number must be answered during that office’s established business hours. This means that someone must always be available to answer calls. If you are responsible for answering the main number and you must leave, ensure someone is available to answer it.

If your office’s telephone switching equipment provides voice mail service, you must use it rather than a separate answering machine. Answering machines may only be used by personnel in offices where voice mail is not available.

Directly answer your telephone calls whenever possible. When using voice mail or an answering machine, make sure the following practices are implemented:

- Use a courteous, informative outgoing message
- Be diligent about keeping your outgoing message up to date
- Encourage your caller to leave a message
- Provide your caller with a way to reach a “live” person

Avoid the following practices:

- Leaving the caller unsure of what person or office/agency has been reached
- Using voice mail or answering machines to screen your calls or avoid answering the telephone
- Allowing your outgoing message to provide outdated information

Attached are several examples of outgoing messages. You may develop your own message, but ensure that you include your name, office (or agency) name, an indication of your availability, and a way for the caller to obtain immediate assistance.

**Timeframe:** Effective immediately.

**Background:** This IM replaces ID-2003-009, which expired 09/30/04.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** None.

**Coordination:** This policy was coordinated with the State and District Administrative Officers and the State Office IRM Telecommunications Group.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact Kent Saxon, State Telecommunications Lead, by calling (208) 373-3941 or via e-mail.

**Boise District with Union:** This IM contains current and existing approved policy.

Signed  
K Lynn Bennett

Authenticated  
Shellie Hartsock  
Administrative Specialist

Attachments

1 – WO IM No. 2005-144 (2 pp)

2 – Samples of Voice Mail and Answering Machine Messages (1 p)

## Samples of Voice Mail and Answering Machine Messages

### In Office: Voice Mail

“Hello, this is Joe Smith\* with the Bureau of Land Management. It is the week of February 26<sup>th</sup> and I’ll be in the office all week. I’m sorry I can’t take your call right now, but if you would like me to call you back please leave your name, phone number, and a message. You may also dial zero to reach the receptionist.”

### In Office: Answering Machine

“Hello, this is Joe Smith\* with the Bureau of Land Management, Jarbidge Field Office. It is the week of February 26<sup>th</sup> and I’ll be in the office all week. I’m sorry I can’t take your call right now, but if you would like me to call you back please leave your name, phone number, and a message. Please call our main office number at 555-1234 if you need immediate assistance.”

### Out of Office: Voice Mail

“Hello, this is Joe Smith\* with the Bureau of Land Management. Today is Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. I’ll be out of the office until 3 P.M. Please leave a message and I’ll return your call. In my absence, Fred Jones at extension 1234 can help you, or you may dial zero to reach the receptionist.”

### Out of Office: Answering Machine

“Hello, this is Joe Smith\* with the Bureau of Land Management. Today is Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. I’ll be out of the office until 3 P.M. Please leave a message and I’ll return your call. In my absence, please call Fred Jones at 555-6789 or our main office number at 555-1234.”

\* Some telephone consultants suggest wording that states that the caller has reached “. . . the office of Joe Smith”, or “. . . the desk of Joe Smith”, or even “You have reached voice mail for Joe Smith”.