



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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IN REPLY REFER TO:
1264 (953) P

May 16, 2013

EMS TRANSMISSION: 05/16/2013
Instruction Memorandum No. WY-2013-030
Expires 09/30/2014

To: All Employees
From: Associate State Director
Subject: Internet Misuse, Email Etiquette and Proper Use Policy

Program Area: Human Resources and Information Systems Management

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) is to remind employees of the policy regarding inappropriate use of the Internet and proper Email etiquette for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wyoming (WY) employees. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, and other individuals (hereafter referred to as “individuals”) who are provided access to the Internet and Email on Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) on the BLM Network within BLM facilities and/or remotely-connected to the BLM Network via Virtual Private Network (VPN).

Policy/Action: The Internet and Email systems are powerful tools which, when used effectively, increases efficiency and productivity in the workplace. Email is used to communicate with the public sector, with co-workers and with other BLM offices. Internet and Email usage can reflect positively or negatively upon both the organization and the individual. All individuals utilizing BLM GFE (desktop/laptop/tablet/smartphone) to access the Internet or Email consent to being monitored for unauthorized activity and security measures to protect the United States Government’s interests. Each individual is responsible for any and all activity conducted utilizing their logon credentials (username/password or smartcard/PIN). Logon credential sharing is prohibited; if individuals suspect their logon credentials have been compromised, they will immediately report the issue to their local Systems Administrator.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Budget Impact: None.

Background: The following guidance is provided to assist employees in the proper use of the BLM Internet and Email systems. Employees are responsible for reading and implementing this policy.

Internet Usage

Employees are allowed limited personal use of the internet, with certain restrictions intended to avoid unnecessary costs and burden to the telecommunications systems and to avoid inappropriate use. Certain activities are absolutely prohibited on GFE; these activities include but are not limited to:

- Visiting and downloading material from pornographic web sites
- Gambling
- Lobbying congress or any Government agency
- Campaigning or other political activity
- Online stock trading
- Online real estate activities
- Activity connected with any type of outside work or commercial activity
- Fundraising for external organizations
- Continuous audio or video streaming from commercial, private, news, or financial organizations

Supervisors who suspect inappropriate use of the Internet by an employee may request a usage report for that employee through the Human Resources Office, who will coordinate the supervisor's request with the National Operations Center.

Email Etiquette

- Employees will use common courtesy and treat others with respect and consideration at all times. Attachment 1 provides guidance to help practice proper "netiquette."
- Email messages will not contain any materials (text or graphics) which exceed the bounds of generally accepted standards of good taste and ethics or be offensive to others. Examples of unacceptable materials include crude jokes; disparaging remarks based on race, religion, etc.; pornographic/lewd graphics.
- Chain letters will not be originated or forwarded by any BLM WY employee. Employees receiving a chain letter will delete it and are encouraged to inform the sender that such messages are not welcome.
- Employees will use discretion in deciding whether to send Email messages to large groups of co-workers, as can be done by using "Group" addresses such as "BLM_WY_ALL." Messages should be sent to large groups of co-workers only when warranted and only when it is clear that all employees have a need to know the content of the message.

- The email system should not be treated as a “BLM WY Intranet Chat Room,” and personal opinions regarding specific issues should not be “cc’d” to all employees in an office or several offices, even when a forum has been provided.
- Employees are not to share their User ID or password with anyone. To ensure this security measure, employees must “lock” their work station as required under the Department of the Interior (DOI) revised 375 DM 19 and the DOI Security Control Standards.
 - ❖ Users must understand they are responsible for all activity occurring on their individual accounts while logged on. Lockout procedures, such as <ctrl-alt-del> or removal of smartcard must be utilized when away from their GFE computing device. Screen savers should be enabled and set to automatically engage after ten minutes or less of inactivity. Re-entry of the user’s username/password or smartcard/PIN shall be required to unlock the user’s GFE computing device. Users must log out of workstations at the end of their workday. Workstations should remain on to enable remote administration.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: The BLM IT Security Handbook H-1264-1 was retired January 2013; handbook is superseded by the DOI revised 375 DM 19 and the DOI Security Control Standards.

Employees violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from Federal service. Management reserves the right to limit or eliminate Internet and Email use by an employee found to be in violation of this policy.

These guidelines reflect common sense for the vast majority of employees and will not alter the manner in which the Email system is used.

Coordination: This policy was coordinated with the Human Resources Office (WY953) and the Information Systems Management and Technology Office (WY9571).

If you have any questions, please contact Missy Cook, Human Resources Specialist, Employee Relations at 307-775-6352, or rcook@blm.gov.

Signed by:
Mary Jo Rugwell
Associate State Director

Authenticated by:
Sherry Dixon
Administrative Assistant

1 Attachment
1 - Netiquette (3 pp)

Distribution
Director (700), Rm. 5613, MIB 1 (w/o atch.)
Director (590), Rm. 700, LS 1 (w/o atch.)
CF 1 (w/atc.)

Netiquette

Netiquette (etiquette for the Internet) is simple good manners and business courtesy. Some of it may seem basic, but some infringements can result in major problems for others or can create an unintended insult to another user. Below are the basics of netiquette. Please take the time to educate yourself on all aspects of behavior and decorum within the Internet, including Email.

First, Be Polite:

If there is one rule that should be kept in mind at all times, it is “USE COMMON COURTESY.” Whether you are posting a message in a forum, sending or responding to an Email, participating in a chat, or writing your Web page text, do not condescend to your reader and do not insult them. The biggest problem people have with the Internet is that they forget or are unaware that the written word has different effects on the recipient than a spoken word. When you speak something, people can hear the tone of your voice and they can interrupt you for explanations or clarifications to make sure they did not misinterpret your words or intent. If they can see you, they can take visual clues from your face and body to see if you intend humor or if you are trying to soften what sounds like a harsh sentence. This is lost in text, and the immediacy of Email in particular creates many misperceptions in which a hastily written response comes across as terse, insulting, condescending, and/or mean spirited. This is the reason some people use emoticons (visual clues) in their Emails, but these are not considered professional for business Email.

Some “Netiquette” tips to help you overcome the limitations of electronic communications:

- Use asterisks (*) or underscores (_) surrounding a *word* to indicate emphasis.
- Don't SHOUT. Writing in all capital letters indicates shouting and is considered rude.
- Be careful when using irony or sarcasm. It may be misunderstood.
- Use emoticons such as :-) or :- (to signal the tone of your message, but be careful not to overuse them, especially in business communications.
- Include a concise informative subject line.
- When replying, include only the relevant portions of the original message. Delete attachments to reduce the size of the message.

Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself, with courtesy and respect. Imagine how you would feel if you were in the other person's shoes. There is a simple and useful test for anything you are about to post or mail. Ask yourself: “Would I say this to the person's face?” If the answer is no, rewrite and reread. Repeat the process until you feel sure that you would feel as comfortable saying these words to the live person as you do sending them electronically.

Remember those are real people out there. Try not to hurt their feelings. Also keep in mind that, when you communicate electronically, your words are written. All Email is stored in archive on backup tape and in the receiver's inbox where you have no control over them. In other words, there is a good chance they can come back to haunt you. Only send messages and files you are willing to have made public knowledge.

Second, respect other people's time and be brief where appropriate:

People today seem to have less time than ever before. When you send Email or post to a discussion group, you are asking for other people's time. Be brief.

Unless you are involved in an extended correspondence with someone or are otherwise engaged in a consensual extended exchange of information, do not send out textbook-sized Emails promoting your ideas. One of the golden rules of editing is the importance of deleting unimportant information and removing repetitious information. Say what needs to be said and let people contact you for more information. Long Emails and forum postings also tend not to be read so your effort may all be wasted.

Also consider whether others will actually want to receive your information. It is very easy to send information to huge mailing lists. We sometimes find ourselves "cc'ing" people out of habit. People are already inundated with more information than they can absorb. Before you copy people, ask yourself if they really need the information. If the answer is no, do not waste their time. If the answer is maybe, think twice before you send.

Third, be professional:

In the electronic communication world, you are judged by what you write. Use proper spelling and grammar. Be polite and pleasant. Do not use offensive language or be confrontational. Keep things as simple as possible and make sure your messages are clear and logical. When you see yourself writing "it is my understanding that" or "I believe that," ask yourself if you really want to post the note before checking your facts.

Do not flame. Flaming is when people castigate a user via Email (or in forums) in rather mean spirited terms for an infringement of rules or ideas. It is a slippery slope of bad manners, so do not flame others, and if you are flamed, do not respond. If you are flamed in a forum or chat room, contact the local Systems Administrator and make your complaint. If you receive a nasty Email do one of these two things; delete it or ignore the meanness and respond to the sender's actual points, minus the meanness.

Know where you are. What is appropriate in a chat room? For example, celebrity gossip in a Fox TV chat room is inappropriate in a business discussion group. Leave gossip and innuendo out of business communications. Not only could you land yourself in legal trouble, you could easily insult people you might want to do business with.

Fourth, be forgiving:

When someone makes a mistake, whether it is a spelling error or an unnecessarily long answer be kind. If it is a minor error do not feel compelled to say anything at all. If you decide to point out a mistake, point it out politely and preferably by private Email rather than in public. Give people the benefit of the doubt; and do not assume that they just do not know any better. Never be arrogant or self-righteous about it. Such rudeness is just as major a mistake and extremely poor "Netiquette."