Electronic Communications Policy

The use of electronic communications is available for the staff and will continue to be developed to assist us in communicating and working efficiently and productively. Staff are provided with the opportunity to use mediums such as telephones, faxes, and lnternet which are network resources and facilities owned by the organisation. They should be used to communicate effectively and efficiently. They should not be abused.

Foundation staff are to be responsible for their own conduct. These communication mediums must not be used to offend, discriminate, or harass other work colleagues or the public. This includes, but is not limited to sending, storing, transmitting, creating or down loading material of this nature. If staffs receive inappropriate material through the electronic network, they should immediately delete it and notify the sender not to send that sort of material. Staff should notify the appropriate authority if they continue to receive that sort of material. Accidental connection to an inappropriate website on the Internet should also be disconnected immediately. Any offence may result in disciplinary action or termination of employment.

Policy on the use of electronic facilities

General Principle

The Foundation offers staff quality communication and research tools through provision of e-mail and Internet access. Access during work hours is restricted to work purposes. However, staff are permitted to use Foundation e-mail and internet facilities in their own time for private use in accordance with this policy. In addition access to the Internet and use of e-mail must be consistent with the Foundations ethos, values and policies.

The Foundation operates in a friendly, even informal way, and people who work here should feel they are among friends as well as colleagues. There is a presumption on the part of the Board Chair who is the employer, that the people who work here are professional, competent and trustworthy.
However, it is necessary to be clear about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable regarding the use of e-mail and the internet at Treacy Centre.

Purpose

This document sets out the security, administration and internal rules which should be observed when communicating electronically or using the IT facilities provided by the Edmund Rice Foundation. Staff should ensure they are familiar with the terms of this Policy in order to minimise potential damage which may arise as a result of misuse of e-mail or internet facilities. This policy applies to the staff of the Foundation.

Property

Edmund Rice Foundation is responsible for all e-mail messages and webpages created by its staff in performing their duties.

Application

The application of this Policy covers all forms of electronic messages, including:
- e-mail
- voice mail
- 'chat' facilities or other interactive email/internet facilities

Monitoring

- All messages on the Foundations emails will be treated as business-related messages, which may be monitored. Accordingly, staff should not expect that any information or document transmitted or stored on the Centre's network will be private.

- E-mail may be viewed from time to time by people authorised by management, particularly staff with responsibility for e-mail and internet management, for a number of purposes. These may include reasons of a technical nature, for accountability purposes and for any other reason deemed necessary.

- Staff should be aware that the Foundation is able to monitor use of the internet. This includes the sites and content visited and the length of time spent using the internet and the number of megabytes downloaded.

Personal Use

- Generally speaking, staff personal internet and email use should be conducted at home by establishing a private internet account with an internet service provider of their choice. Personal use of the internet and email facilities is permitted, provided that such use does not interfere with the performance of work duties and is minimal. It is inappropriate to use time assigned to work duties for personal use of the internet or email facilities provided at the Centre.

- Any use of the internet or e-mail for personal purposes is still subject to the same terms and conditions as otherwise described in this Policy.

- Excessive or inappropriate use of electronic facilities for personal reasons may lead to disciplinary action.

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- It is acknowledged that many staff members work well beyond their normal working hours and a short break to check personal e-mail or conduct personal research on the Internet does not impact on their work. Non-business use should be very limited during working hours and must not interfere with assigned duties and responsibilities. Such use must adhere at all times to this policy. Outside normal working hours, employees may use the Foundation network for personal use that is consistent with professional conduct and this policy.

Content

- E-mail correspondence should be treated in the same way as any other correspondence, such as a letter or a fax, that is, as a permanent written record which may be read by persons other than the addressee and which could result in personal or the Foundations liability.

- Staff and/or the Foundation may be liable for what is communicated in an email message. E-mail is neither private nor secret. It may be easily copied, forwarded, saved, intercepted, archived and may be subject to discovery in litigation[1].

- It is possible that e-mail correspondence could be required in legal proceedings. In such circumstances, it is illegal to destroy pertinent records.

- The Internet or e-mail should never be used for the following purposes:

  - To abuse, vilify, defame, harass or discriminate (by virtue of sex, race, religion, national origin or other);

  - To send or receive obscene or pornographic material;

  - To injure the reputation of the Foundation or in a manner that may cause embarrassment to the Foundation;

  - To send or receive chain mail;

  - To infringe the copyright or other intellectual property rights of another person;

  - To harass or cause offence to another employee or visitor to the Province or any other person; or

  - To perform any other unlawful or inappropriate act.

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[1] Under current requirements, encrypted files must be unencrypted for the police or litigation purposes.

- If staff receive inappropriate material by e-mail, it should be deleted immediately and not forwarded to anyone else. It would be appropriate to discourage the sender from sending further materials of that nature.

- Comments that are not appropriate in the workplace will be also inappropriate when sent by e-mail. E-mail messages can easily be misconstrued; accordingly, words and attached documents should be carefully chosen and expressed in a clear, professional manner.

- Any use of the Foundation's IT network in a manner inconsistent with this policy or in any other inappropriate manner, would give rise to disciplinary action, including termination of an employee's employment.

Privacy

- In the course of carrying out of duties on behalf of the Foundation, staff may have access to, or handle personal information relating to others. E-mail should not be used to disclose personal information to another except in accordance with the Foundations Privacy Policy or with proper authorisation.

- The Privacy Act requires both staff and the Foundation take reasonable steps to protect the personal information that is held from misuse and unauthorised access. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for the security of any computer assigned for work purposes and not allow it, or any Foundation computer, to be used by an unauthorised party.

- In order to comply with the Foundations obligations under the Privacy Act, staff must use the blind copy option when sending emails to multiple recipients where disclosure of those persons' email addresses will impinge upon their privacy.

Copyright

- Copyright law may apply to the information intended for distribution and must always be observed. The copyright material of third parties (for example: software, database files, documentation, cartoons, articles, graphic files and downloaded information) must not be distributed through email without specific authorisation to do so.

- Copyright laws must be observed. Before downloading or copying any material, attention must be paid to the copyright conditions specified on documents as well as general copyright conditions. Staff are prohibited from downloading software or other files as well as from modifying any such files without permission from the copyright holder. In particular, it is expressly forbidden to install any software on Foundation equipment without prior authority from the IT Support Officer.

Confidentiality

- The internet and e-mail are insecure means of transmitting information, therefore, items of a highly confidential or sensitive nature should not be sent via e-mail. The appropriate alternative is to use the drop box system or disk. It should be noted that there is always a trail and a copy saved somewhere, not necessarily only on the Foundation network server.

- Staff must ensure that all e-mails that are sent from an email address linked to the Foundation contain the Province's standard disclaimer message, which reads as follows:

  - The contents of this message are intended for the named recipient only. The message may contain information that is confidential and/or may be subject to legal professional privilege. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, reliance upon it, disclosure or copying of it is unauthorised. If you have received this message in error, please reply to the author and delete the message from your system.

- Old or unnecessary e-mail messages should be regularly deleted and only those e-mail messages archived that may be required in the future. Retention of messages fills up large amounts of storage space on the network server and can slow down performance. Staff should maintain as few messages as possible in in-boxes and out-boxes. If there are items which may be required at a later date, please ensure that these are e-mail saved in a network directory so that appropriate backups are made Province wide.

Viruses

- Opening virus-infected e-mail, especially attachments can cause the virus to be sent around the Province to other computers.

- Staffare advised to be careful when using e-mail especially for private correspondence. Friends and family can unknowingly send attachments that carry hidden viruses.

  If an email contains a link to a web page (.com extension), the link should be written down and then typed or copied and pasted into the web browser.

General

- The terms and recommended conduct described in this Policy are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of the Foundation e-mail and Internet facilities. Staff are encouraged to act with caution and take into account the underlying principles intended by this Policy. If any staff member feels unsure of the appropriate action relating to use of e-mail or the Internet they should contact the National Education Officer.

- When using shared terminals, caution needs to be exercised in the book-marking procedure. It is expected that each staff member will establish his/her own name for the bookmark and be careful not to delete other users' bookmarks.