



# COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

## APPROPRIATE USE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years Alameda County has made a significant investment in information technology (IT) systems, in order to make employees more efficient in their jobs. Because of advances in this technology, there is now more responsibility placed on the employee to ensure that computers, software, data, and all telecommunication devices used on behalf of the County are used appropriately and for appropriate County purposes. Adequate safeguards must be in place for both the employees' and the County's protection. This document is intended to inform employees of County policy in this area. To the extent that this policy may not cover every possible situation, common sense should be exercised at all times regarding appropriate work place use of IT systems by employees in public service. Nothing contained in this policy shall prevent employees from using the necessary software, social media outlets, or other IT resources in order to complete their assigned duties as explained more fully below. If you are unsure regarding the appropriateness of what you want to do, ask your department head or designee.

As used in this policy, the phrases "IT systems" and "IT resources" include all computers, telephones (including cellular phones), personal digital assistants (PDAs), radio hardware (including peripherals), software applications and data (including email and voice mail), social media, networks and network connections (including the Internet), and documentation and other capabilities intended for the purpose of processing, transferring, or storing data in support of County goals. The term "user" includes permanent, provisional, temporary, and project employees, as well as persons hired by the County on a contract basis.

As used in this policy, forms of "social media" include but are not limited to discussion forums, chat rooms, blogs, podcasts, Wikis, RSS feeds, photo and video sharing, and any type of social networks.

### EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### • **Protect your user ID and password.**

Your user IDs and passwords should not be shared with anyone unless there is a legitimate business reason. Change your password frequently and do not write it down. If a password is compromised for any reason, the password shall be changed as soon as possible.

#### • **Access to IT systems, data, and networks.**

You may access data for which you have been authorized in the normal performance of your job duties. You must respect the privacy of clients and co-workers by not sharing information unless required for business purposes.

#### • **IT systems are to be used only for authorized Alameda County business.**

County-owned or leased equipment is to be used for business purposes only. If you are unsure of what is appropriate in your department, ask your department head, designee, or departmental human resources personnel.

Activities prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Transmittal or use of any material in violation of any federal, state, or local law, ordinance, or regulation;
- Transmittal or use of any material or communication that is threatening, defamatory, obscene, discriminatory, or offensive;
- Accessing inappropriate websites;
- Transmitting personal opinions or personal data via County telecommunication devices;
- Use of any County IT system for commercial or financial gain;
- Personal use including, but not limited to, financial transactions, shopping, stock trading, etc.;
- Misrepresentation under any circumstances of a user's true identity;
- Unauthorized access to any County IT system;
- Any action intended to accomplish or assist in unauthorized access to County IT systems;
- Unauthorized or improper downloading, accessing, or transmittal of copyrighted information, documents, or software ;
- Disclosure of any confidential information that could breach the security of any County IT system;
- Transmittal of unauthorized broadcast communications or solicitations (such as mass email transmissions);

- Any action that causes the County to incur a fee for which there has not been prior approval;
- Use of a security code or password other than as authorized;
- Deliberately attempting to disrupt any County IT system or network performance, or to destroy data by spreading or introducing computer viruses or other malware;
- Establishing or modifying web sites for any purpose unless such activity is part of the employee's normal job functions or is directed by the Agency Director or Director's designee.

#### • IT resources

Use only legally acquired and licensed software.

All County IT resources shall remain the property of the County of Alameda and may be examined at any time. Users must not install, upgrade, repair, or remove IT resources without IT management approval. Proprietary or County-developed software must not be copied or distributed without management approval.

There is a significant financial liability to the County if software that has not been legally obtained is used on County-owned equipment.

Only software that has been legally acquired and licensed may be used. Check the documentation provided with the software before you make copies for others. Generally you may make copies of software for back-up purposes only.

There is a potential for introducing a virus into a County-owned system, and possibly even Countywide, whenever outside software is used. If you need to use an outside software program for business purposes, you must first obtain permission from your department head or designee.

If you need to download County forms or documents in the course of your job duties to an external portable device such as a flash drive, you must receive authorization from your department head or designee. The County shall provide such devices, subject to the following conditions:

- Employees must use County-provided external portable devices only for those purposes authorized by the County;
- Employees must safeguard the devices and immediately report any loss;
- Employees shall have no expectation of privacy in any materials downloaded to the devices

Only County-approved equipment is to have a permanent physical connection to County networks. Users should consult with their System Administrator for the proper use of portable devices and the relocation and reconnection of desktop devices.

The County cannot provide technical support of unapproved IT resources. Installation, upgrade, repair, or other forms of support will only be performed on official County-owned, leased, or licensed IT resources. Employee-owned equipment shall not be supported by the County.

#### • Social media

Strategic use of social media may help the County foster positive relationships with key audiences such as clients/consumers, community based partners, taxpayers, voters, government peers, employees, and other stakeholders. Use of social media in the course and scope of the performance of an employee's job duties shall occur only after permission for such use has been obtained from the department head or designee, and only to the extent authorized. Personal use of any type of social media during on-duty working hours is prohibited. Using County IT systems or IT resources to access non-County business social media sites is prohibited for non-County related activities.

Employees must adhere to federal, state, County and department/agency compliance rules and policies when using or participating in social media. This includes protecting confidentiality, privacy, and security, and safeguarding Alameda County and department/agency assets and public image.

Employees shall abide by copyright laws by ensuring that they have permission to use or reproduce any copyrighted text, photos, graphics, videos, or other materials owned by other individuals or groups.

Employees shall not post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, or abusive.

#### • Workplace privacy

**Users of County IT systems shall have no expectation of privacy with regard to the use of such systems.** Alameda County retains the right to examine all electronic storage media, data files, logs, and programs that are part of any County IT system. Moreover, users shall have no expectation of privacy with regard to any work-related materials created on non-County IT systems, upon emailing or transmitting such work-related materials to any recipient.

System administrators are authorized to examine, remove from distribution, and/or retain electronic files within the scope of their responsibilities to troubleshoot and/or repair the IT resources under their purview. Content in violation of policies or the

law will be reported to management and appropriate action shall be taken.

This Appropriate Use Policy is intended as a starting point and may be enhanced by your department to cover any special circumstances. County agencies and departments are prohibited from adopting rules that conflict with this County-wide policy.

• **Violations of this policy**

Violations of this policy will be handled in a manner consistent with the County's disciplinary process up to and including termination, and may be subject to prosecution by local, state, and federal authorities.

I certify that I have read, understand, accept, and agree to act in accordance with this statement of policy, requirements and /or conditions/terms of employment.

ALAMEDA COUNTY REFERENCES:

Board of Supervisors File No. 28545, Item No. 38

APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION:

BOS Approved: November 6, 2012