



South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue

WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

ICT E-Mail Code of Practice

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SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue is keen to keep up to date with new technology such as electronic mail (e-mail) which increasingly replaces traditional forms of communication.
- 1.2 E-mail differs from traditional forms of business communications by, for example, its speed, message structure and degree of informality.
- 1.3 This code of practice should be read in conjunction with the Information Systems Security Policy which states SYFR's policy in order to keep information secure and to ensure that South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue operates with minimal disruption and within the law.

2. Security Risks

- 2.1 Despite the many advantages of using e-mail, there are several security risks associated with such a system.

Security risks include:

- * Vulnerability of messages to unauthorised access;
- * Vulnerability to error, eg., incorrect addressing or misdirection;
- * Impact of a change of communication media on business processes e.g., the effect of increased speed of despatch or the effect of sending formal messages from person to person rather than company to company;
- * Legal considerations, such as the potential need for proof of origin.
- * Inappropriate use of the e-mail facility.

- 2.2 It is therefore appropriate to introduce this code of practice for internal and external e-mail usage in order to reduce security risks created by e-mail.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

- 3.1 Become familiar with this code of practice and remain within the guidelines set out here. Failure to adhere to the code of practice will be a disciplinary offence which may lead to disciplinary action being taken, in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.
- 3.2 Employees are responsible for all e-mail messages sent under their user ID.

4. Use of E-MAIL Facility

- 4.1 Internal e-mail is available to most employees in the organisation. Where it is required external e-mail is also available.

4.2 Written authorisation must be provided by the responsible line manager in order to allow an employee access to the e-mail facility.

4.3 E-mail is a preferred means of communication because of the fast delivery time and low cost. It should be used:

- when a quick response or turn-around time is required.
- when it is not necessary for a discussion e.g. meeting or phone conversation to take place.
- * when a personal signature is not required.
- * when information is not of a personal or confidential nature.
- * when you are sure the recipient will receive, open or respond to the e mail as quickly as they would to a letter or a fax.

5. Incoming E-Mails

5.1 When receiving incoming e-mails check the source. Any suspicious attachments should be checked by the ICT Section for viruses before opening.

6. External E-Mails

6.1 Keep your style of communication clear and brief and remember that our correspondence gives an impression of the Brigade to the outside world. The impression should therefore be a positive one.

6.2 Personal opinions expressed by individuals in e-mails must be declared as such and must not appear to be those of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. The following disclaimer will automatically be attached to all external messages:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This e-mail and the information that it contains may be confidential, legally privileged and protected by law. Access is authorised only by the intended recipient. It is believed to be free from viruses which may affect any IT system. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any e-mails or attachments are virus free as the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service accepts no responsibility. Any legal liability (in contract, tort or otherwise) arising from any third party acting or refraining from acting on any information contained in this e-mail is hereby excluded. If you are not the intended recipient please notify the sender immediately and do not disclose the contents to any other person, use it for any purpose, or store or copy the information in any medium. Copyright in this email and attachments belongs to the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service who also reserve the right to

monitor this communication. The author also asserts the right to object to any misuse.

7. Maintenance of E-Mail Box

7.1 Regular maintenance of your e-mail boxes should be carried out. In order to maintain your e-mail boxes the following practices should be undertaken:

- Open all e-mails regularly and empty your deleted items folder weekly.
- * Only messages which are necessary for current business needs should be retained in your e-mail box.
- All e-mail messages which are necessary for permanent business records should be printed-off or saved to other folders outside of the mail system and not stored in your deleted items folder. Where available, e-mails should be saved in the corporate Document Management System as appropriate.
- Always abide by the data protection policy and do not store or circulate data inadvertently.
- * Insignificant, obsolete and unnecessary messages, return receipts and attachments should always be deleted.

8. E-Mail Do's and Dont's

8.1 Do!

- * Bin junk e-mail and only forward it if you are sure the recipient will have use for it.
- Check all downloaded files/attachments for viruses before opening them and never circulate them before this is done
- * Contact the IT Section if you suspect that a virus has been imported.
- * Bring to the attention of your Section Head any suspected inappropriate use of the e-mail system including the receipt of an offensive or inappropriate e-mail.
- * Ensure that all messages identify the sender and all recipients of that message.
- * Abide by the Brigade's Information Systems Security Policy.

8.2 Don't!

- * Accept e-mail from any suspicious or unknown source.
- * Let anyone else use your I-D or password to send an e-mail. It will be logged in your name!

- * Download software from files with an 'EXE' file extension direct from a Website without prior consultation with the IT Section
- Send data of a personal nature, unless you are sure that you are authorised to do so under the Data Protection Act.
- * Send confidential e-mails.
- * Forward junk e-mail to groups of people.
- * Send obscene, pornographic, offensive or harassing e-mail. Any form of harassment or intimidation by e-mail will lead to disciplinary action.
- * Do not make comments in e-mail that could be used against the Brigade in litigation.
- * Use e-mail for illegal or defamatory activities.

9. Confidentiality of E-Mails

- 9.1 The e-mail system has been installed as a means of business communication. Although employees are assigned personal mailboxes and individual passwords to access this system, e-mail messages should not be regarded as personal and confidential as the e-mail system may be monitored for quality and standards purposes.

10. Personal Use

- 10.1 The use of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue computers and consumables is intended to be generally limited to that necessary to fulfil the official duties of your job. Where staff have agreed extra-curricular activities eg Trade Union or professional body responsibilities, reasonable use of external e-mail will be regarded as an extension of current permissions for telephone use. However, when dealing with associated activities it should not significantly impact on work related matters.
- 10.2 It is acknowledged that it is impossible to prevent the receipt of e-mail messages and also that it is not necessarily appropriate to place onerous restrictions on the use of the e-mail system for non-work related issues.
- 10.3 However, inappropriate or excessive use of the e-mail system for non work related issues is a serious matter that may invoke disciplinary proceedings.
- 10.4 For the purpose of clarity it is necessary to give examples of where the use of the e-mail would and would not be acceptable:
- 10.5 Examples of acceptable use of E-Mail:
- To organise a social activity on behalf of your section providing you have permission to do so from your line manager.
 - * Promotion of a charitable event

- Personal use of an urgent nature with the permission of your line manager.

10.6 Examples of unacceptable use of E-Mail:

- * Use of the e-mail facility resulting in personal gain e.g., selling your own belongings.
- Excessive use of the facility for personal business of whatever nature e.g., confirming personal social arrangements

10.7 In order to ensure quality and standards South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue reserves the right to periodically monitor the contents of e-mail messages.

10.8 South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue recognises that the majority of employees are trustworthy and appreciate the use of access to equipment/services and do not abuse these facilities. However, this code of practice must be followed at all times and those that do abuse their position will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

10.9 All of the above applies to the use of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue computer systems by employees both at their normal place of work and elsewhere.

