

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

Effective 1 May 2008

WARNING

Read this policy completely.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of your employment.

Applicability

1. This policy applies to all employees of the Halifax Regional Municipality and employees of Agencies, Boards, and Commissions over which the HRM Council has authority, as of 1 May 2008.
2. This policy applies to Members of Council. (To be determined by Council on or before 1 May 2008).
3. This policy applies to anyone engaged by HRM in the provision of professional or other contracted services, and who require access to HRM's internet services.
4. For the purpose of this policy, the above will collectively be referred to as "users", unless specifically identified.

Purpose

This policy supersedes the previous policy titled "E-Mail/Internet Policy and Use Guidelines - December 2001". This policy complements the current "E-Mail Acceptable Use Policy."

Access to and use of the Internet is part of the overall tool set provided by the HRM to assist users in carrying out work that directly fulfills the objectives and goals of the HRM. Management is responsible for insuring that users have read and accept responsibility for understanding this policy.

Ignorance of the policy shall not constitute an excuse for non-compliance, nor will it avert subsequent personnel action.

Introduction

While the Internet is a valuable tool, it is imperative for users to be aware that the Internet is a vast, global, unregulated network of resources. Not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete, or current information. The Internet also provides access to information that is not appropriate or useful in the workplace. As HRM computing resources and infrastructure are finite, inappropriate use can only serve to negatively impact the availability of those resources for HRM work and business.

Policy Statements

1. Access to the Internet is a service provided by the Halifax Regional Municipality. HRM encourages all users who have access to utilize this valuable resource in positive and constructive ways to enhance their work productivity.
2. HRM provides computers, systems and services, including the Internet, for HRM business use. All activity originating within the HRM data network and using the HRM Internet service is electronically logged and monitored. These records of an individuals Internet usage may be reviewed on the request of a supervisor, or by Information Technology staff while conducting troubleshooting or related duties. HRM Internet users should not expect any level of privacy as it relates to their usage of HRM Internet services, and should be aware that Internet usage logs may be available for public scrutiny if requested.
3. For the purposes of this policy any reference to Internet means, access to the Internet including all connectivity provided through the HRM Network, and Local and Remote access regardless of the ownership of the accessing device. The usage includes all activity and transactions that can occur via the HRM Internet.
4. Usage must respect and be in accordance with the goals of the Halifax Regional Municipality. Users must use the Internet responsibly and in so doing must not jeopardize the integrity and availability of HRM systems in any way.
5. **Acceptable Use** of the Internet when related to HRM work, whether by an internal or external conduit, includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Web based applications e.g. GIS Mapping, RecConnect, approved access to internal and external databases
 - b. Business related research
 - c. Quick access to information e.g. Canada 411, Canada Post postal codes
 - d. Education and Instruction
 - e. External supplier information and transactions
 - f. Web based business meetings, webinars, and web-casts
 - g. Professional, business, and work related associations
6. **Limited Personal Use** of the Internet is acceptable, subject to the restrictions outlined in Item 7 - Prohibited Use and provided that:
 - a. Usage is during designated work breaks or outside work hours unless permission for other personal use has been granted by their supervisor.
 - b. Internet access is of a reasonable duration and frequency.
 - c. Appropriate Internet sites are visited, keeping in mind the Internet activity will be monitored. Examples of appropriate personal use may include but are not limited to:
 - i. Internet Banking Services
 - ii. News, Sports and Weather
 - iii. Community focused activities
 - iv. Learning and Professional Development

7. **Prohibited Use** is any use of HRM Internet access and services:

a. That is used for **Illegal** purposes; engagement and/or solicitation of criminal activity. The HRM *Illegal and Irregular Conduct Policy* defines Illegal Conduct as:

"...action taken by an individual which is contrary to federal, provincial, or municipal public law and includes acts in violation of the Criminal Code of Canada such as offences against the person (eg. assault or threats), offences against property (eg. theft or damage to property), offences against commerce (eg. fraud or falsifying an employment record), acts in violation of the Municipal Government Act, an act in violation of HRM by-laws."

Examples of illegal use are as follows but are not limited to:

- i. Child Pornography
- ii. Incitement of Hate
- iii. Obscenity
- iv. Terrorism
- v. Harassment
- vi. Libel
- vii. Slander
- viii. Threat of Violence
- ix. Copyright Infringement

b. That has or could reasonably have caused harm to others;

c. That is an intentional action that could jeopardize the integrity of HRM systems and computers.

d. That is **Inappropriate** in the workplace. Examples are as follows but are not limited to:

- i. Pornography
- ii. On-line dating
- iii. Gambling
- iv. Games
- v. Chat and Instant Messaging Services e.g. MSN, Yahoo
- vi. Streaming Audio and Video unrelated to employment or education (eg. sporting events, Internet TV)
- vii. Downloading software and inappropriate files from unauthorized sources (computer virus risk).
- viii. Commercial and Business ventures
- ix. Blogging
- x. Breach of Confidentiality

- e. Inappropriate Content. Examples are as follows but are not limited to:
 - i. Materials tending to deprive any person of his or her rights under the Human Rights Act of Canada
 - ii. Text or graphic files such as jokes and computer graphics containing sexual, racial, religious or otherwise objectionable overtones
 - iii. Files or material which could infringe on another employee's workplace rights
 - iv. Impolite, abusive, racial, sexist, or otherwise objectionable language

Procedures

1. Reporting and Investigation of Illegal Activity

a. Reporting of suspected illegal activity shall be in accordance with the HRM Illegal and Irregular Conduct Policy. BSCG will advise the Division Manager Information Technology to take steps to preserve evidence and assist investigating authorities.

b. Managers and supervisors should not attempt to investigate the suspected illegal conduct. HRM Information Technology staff will not investigate actions which may result in criminal prosecution. Such investigations will normally be directed to law enforcement.

2. Reporting of Other Prohibited Usage

If a Supervisor/Manager/Director has a reason to suspect irregular usage, the Supervisor/Manager/Director should immediately notify the Division Manager Information Technology and their Director (if applicable) to the allegation. All documentation, notes, etc. relating to the preliminary examination are to be turned over to BSCG. The BSCG will request that the Director of BPIM or his/her designate take steps to preserve evidence and assist with any investigation.

3. Content Blocking

From time to time, Information Technology staff may determine that certain Internet destinations constitute inappropriate usage, or pose undue risks to the HRM data network infrastructure, and may block HRM users from accessing these locations. The Manager Technology Infrastructure is authorized to manage the list of blocked sites on an ongoing operational basis.

Subsequent Personnel Actions

This policy is to augment current HRM policies governing appropriate behaviour and conduct in the work place. The Illegal and Irregular Conduct (Administrative Order 40) or the Ethical Code of Conduct (Administrative Order 41) Policies should be followed when reporting allegations of illegal or inappropriate use of the Internet.

Copies of each policy can be found:

Illegal and Irregular Conduct Policy:

<http://www.halifax.ca/legislation/adminorders/documents/Admin40.pdf>

Ethical Code of Conduct Policy:

<http://www.halifax.ca/legislation/adminorders/documents/Admin41.pdf>

Substantiated allegations of a breach of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy are subject to disciplinary action and/or sanctions. Discipline or sanctions for inappropriate use may include, but are not limited to:

1. Temporary or permanent revocation of Internet Access;
2. Disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, or in the case of contractors, forfeiture of the contract; and
3. Legal action taken under civil or criminal proceedings.