

E-mail Acceptable Use Policy

E-Mail is a critical mechanism for business communications at Halifax Regional Municipality. However, use of Halifax Regional electronic mail systems and services are a privilege, not a right, and therefore must be used with respect and in accordance with the goals of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Scope

This policy applies to all e-mail systems and services owned by Halifax Regional Municipality, all e-mail account users/holders at Halifax Regional Municipality (both temporary and permanent), and all company e-mail records.

Account Activation/Termination

E-mail access at Halifax Regional Municipality is controlled through individual accounts and passwords. Each user of Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail system is required to read and sign a copy of the E-Mail Acceptable Use Policy prior to receiving an e-mail access account and password. It is the responsibility of the employee to protect the confidentiality of their account and password information.

Employees of Halifax Regional Municipality are granted access to an e-mail account on request of their manager or supervisor. E-mail accounts will be granted to third party non-employees on a case-by-case basis. Possible non-employees that may be eligible for access include:

- Contractors
- Support organizations
- Members of affiliated boards and commissions

Applications for these temporary accounts must be submitted in writing to the Information Technology Help Desk. All terms, conditions, and restrictions governing e-mail use must be in a written and signed agreement.

E-mail access will be terminated with the employee or third party terminates their association with Halifax Regional Municipality, unless other arrangements are made. Halifax Regional Municipality is under no obligation to store or forward the contents of an individual's e-mail inbox/outbox after the term of their employment has ceased.

General Expectations of End Users

Important official communications are often delivered via e-mail. As a result, employees of Halifax Regional Municipality with e-mail accounts are expected to check their e-mail in a

consistent and timely manner so that they are aware of important company announcements and updates, as well as for fulfilling business and role-oriented tasks.

E-mail users are responsible for mailbox management, including organization and cleaning. E-mail users should not normally subscribe to a mailing list, however, if this is a requirement of the position occupied he or she must be aware of how to remove himself or herself from the list and is responsible for doing so in the event that their current e-mail address changes. E-mail users should avoid posting their e-mail address on public newsgroups or other areas of the internet as this is a major source of spam e-mail.

E-mail users are also expected to comply with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct. All users should familiarize themselves with vacation rules and use them when they are expected to be away from the office for extended periods. Also, the signature function will automatically include a signature block at the bottom of each sent message, and should include the user's name, title and contact information. Assistance with these functions can be obtained through the IT Help Desk.

Appropriate Use

Individuals at Halifax Regional Municipality are encouraged to use e-mail to further the goals and objectives of Halifax Regional Municipality. The types of activities that are encouraged include:

- Communicating with fellow employees, business partners of Halifax Regional Municipality, and clients within the context of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Acquiring or sharing information necessary or related to the performance of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Participating in educational or professional development activities.

Inappropriate Use

Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail systems and services are not to be used for purposes that could be reasonably expected to cause excessive strain on systems. Individual e-mail use will not interfere with others' use and enjoyment of Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail system and services. E-mail use at Halifax Regional Municipality will comply with all applicable laws, all Halifax Regional Municipality policies, and all Halifax Regional Municipality contracts.

The following activities are deemed inappropriate uses of Halifax Regional Municipality systems and services and are prohibited:

- Use of e-mail for illegal or unlawful purposes, including copyright infringement, obscenity, libel, slander, fraud, defamation, plagiarism, harassment, intimidation, forgery, impersonation, soliciting for illegal pyramid schemes, and computer tampering (e.g. spreading of computer viruses).
- Use of e-mail in any way that violates Halifax Regional Municipality's policies, rules or administrative orders, including, but not limited to, the HR Policy on Ethical Conduct and Corporate Guiding Principles.

- Viewing, copying, altering, or deletion of e-mail accounts or files belonging to Halifax Regional Municipality or another individual without authorized permission.
- Sending of unreasonably large e-mail attachments. The total size of an individual e-mail message sent (including attachment) as well as the types of attachments which may be transmitted will be established by the IT Department, and may change with operational requirements and current threats from virus activity etc. These specifics will be promulgated to all e-mail users as changes occur.
- Opening e-mail attachments from unknown or unsigned sources. Attachments are a primary conduit of computer viruses and should be treated with utmost caution.
- Sharing e-mail account passwords with another person or attempting to obtain another person's e-mail account password. E-mail accounts are only to be used by the registered user, unless shared accounts have been specifically approved and provided to meet operational requirements (i.e. Reception accounts, etc.).
- Excessive personal use of Halifax Regional Municipality e-mail resources. Halifax Regional Municipality allows limited personal use for communication with family and friends, independent learning, and public service so long as it does not interfere with staff productivity, pre-empt any business activity, or consume more than a trivial amount of resources. Halifax Regional Municipality prohibits personal use of its e-mail systems and services for unsolicited mass mailings, non-Halifax Regional Municipality commercial activity, political campaigning, dissemination of chain letters, and use by non-employees.
- Sending of e-mail to large numbers of HRM employees (i.e. HRM ALL) will be managed by the Help Desk. Users are prohibited from mailing directly to all employees in the address book.

Monitoring and Confidentiality

The e-mail systems and services used at Halifax Regional Municipality are owned by the municipality and are therefore its property. E-mail documents simply represent electronic versions of what would otherwise be an HRM corporate record. This gives Halifax Regional Municipality the right to monitor any and all e-mail traffic passing through its e-mail system. While the company does not actively read end-user e-mail, e-mail messages may be inadvertently read by IT staff during the normal course of managing the e-mail system.

Future system enhancements supporting document management may make all e-mail messages visible to administrators in the actioning of FOIPOP legal requirements. All users are discouraged from maintaining messages of a personal nature which contain information they may not want disclosed to others.

In addition, backup copies of e-mail messages may exist, despite end-user deletion, in compliance with existing and future records retention policies. The goals of these backup and archiving procedures are to ensure system reliability and prevent business data loss.

If Halifax Regional Municipality discovers or has good reason to suspect activities that do not comply with applicable laws or this policy, e-mail records may be retrieved and used to

document the activity in accordance with due process. All reasonable efforts will be made to notify an employee if his or her e-mail records are to be reviewed. Notification may not be possible, however, if the employee cannot be contacted, as in the case of employee absence due to vacation and it is deemed appropriate in the circumstances.

Use extreme caution when communicating confidential or sensitive information via e-mail. Keep in mind that all e-mail messages sent outside of Halifax Regional Municipality become the property of the receiver as well. A good rule is to not communicate anything that you wouldn't feel comfortable being made public. Demonstrate particular care when using the "Reply" command during e-mail correspondence.

Reporting Misuse

Any allegations of misuse should be promptly reported to the Information Technology Help Desk. If you receive an offensive e-mail, do not forward, delete, or reply to the message. Instead, report it directly to the Help Desk.

Disclaimer

Halifax Regional Municipality assumes no liability for the direct and/or indirect damages arising from the user's use of Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail system and services. Users are solely responsible for the content they disseminate. Halifax Regional Municipality is not responsible for any third-party claim, demand, or damage arising out of use of the Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail systems or services.

Failure to Comply

Violations of this policy will be treated like other allegations of wrongdoing at Halifax Regional Municipality. Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established procedures. Sanctions for inappropriate use on Halifax Regional Municipality's e-mail systems and services may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Temporary or permanent revocation of e-mail access.
- Disciplinary action according to applicable Halifax Regional Municipality policies.
- Termination of employment.
- Legal action according to applicable laws and contractual agreements.