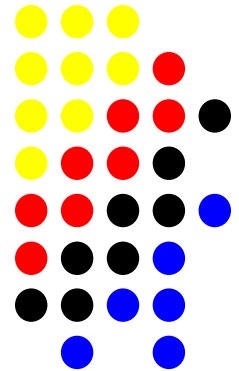




Washoe County, Nevada
**Many Communities.
One County.**



E—Mail Etiquette

A Human Resources Guide



Department of Human Resources

Learn... Grow... Lead... Excel

The Manager's Toolbox

Committed to Excellence

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Guide to E-Mail Etiquette

Rule, Procedures, Responsibilities 3

- Use of Washoe County’s E-Mail..... 3
- Ownership of Washoe County’s E-Mail 3
- Prohibited Uses of Washoe County’s E-Mail 4
- Responsibility 4
- Violations of Washoe County Policy 4

Guidelines for Efficient and Professional E-Mail Usage 5

- An E-Mail E-tiquette P E P Talk 5
- The Rules of E-tiquette Engagement 5

Appendices

- Appendix A: Washoe County Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Policy 11



E-Mail Etiquette

Rules, Procedures and Responsibilities



Washoe County's Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Policy applies to all Washoe County officers and employees, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary, and also to all volunteer workers or contractors, or other users who may be given Internet/Intranet privileges on County computers. Use of electronic mail (e-mail) is included in this Policy.

County employees are expected to always conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner when using County e-mail or other mode of communication, whether externally or internally.

Use of Washoe County's E-Mail

The purpose of e-mail is to conduct County business efficiently, provide public information, and communicate with constituents.

County officers and employees shall not use County computers, telephones and e-mail for personal use if the use would violate the provisions of applicable Statutes, Codes, Ordinances and, or Policies. Specific provisions include:

- Personal use of governmental time, property, equipment, or other facility is authorized on a limited and restricted basis.
- Incidental and occasional personal use of electronic mail is permitted. Such messages become the property of the County and are subject to the same conditions as County e-mail.
- Use of e-mail communication must not interfere with the performance of duties or interfere with the provision of County services.
- Use of e-mail must not create the appearance of impropriety.
- No commercial messages, employee solicitations, messages of a religious or political nature are to be distributed using County e-mail.

Ownership of Washoe County's E-Mail

The County advises officers and employees that no legitimate expectation of privacy can be asserted in their use of the County's computer systems. All data and other electronic messages within the County's system are the property of Washoe County.

E-Mail Etiquette

Prohibited Uses of Washoe County's E-Mail

Officers and employees are forbidden to misuse Internet or Intranet access privileges in ways that may include, but are not limited to:

- E-mail messages that contain content that may be considered offensive, disruptive or in violation of County Policies on Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Harassment, Workplace Violence, or other County Policies. Offensive content includes but is not limited to obscene or harassing language or images, racial, ethnic, and sexual or gender specific comments or images or other comments or images that would offend someone on the basis of their religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin or age.
- E-mail use that benefits an officer's or employee's private business or personal interests.
- E-mail messages sent interdepartmentally to groups of persons regarding non-county, community-wide projects or events or non-county social events.

Responsibility

Individual officers and employees are responsible for their conduct as Internet and Intranet users. Supervisors and managers are responsible for enforcing this policy.

Violations of Washoe County Policy

Violation of the Technology Services Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Policy may result in cancellation of an individual's Internet/Intranet access privileges. In addition, violations may result in appropriate legal action and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.



E-Mail Etiquette

Guidelines for Efficient and Professional E-Mail Usage

An E-Mail E-tiquette P E P Talk

All of your e-mail communication should be written with PEP:

- Professionalism
- Efficiency
- Policy adherence in mind



The Rules of E-tiquette Engagement

1. Never use an e-mail when a phone call or in-person meeting is more appropriate.
2. Do not use e-mail to discuss sensitive or confidential information.
3. Respond promptly.
4. Be clear, concise and to the point.
5. Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.
6. Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.
7. Read and edit the e-mail before you send it.
8. DO NOT WRITE IN CAPITALS.
9. Don't go down in flames.
10. Be prudent with the use of abbreviations and emoticons.
11. Use formats, fonts and stationery carefully.
12. Do not attach unnecessary files.
13. Do not overuse "Reply to All."
14. To, Cc, and Bcc.
15. Do not send unauthorized messages to "All Users" type distribution lists.
16. Use meaningful subject lines.
17. Don't overuse the "Importance: High" option.
18. Be sure to follow the County's Policy on Internet and Intranet Use.

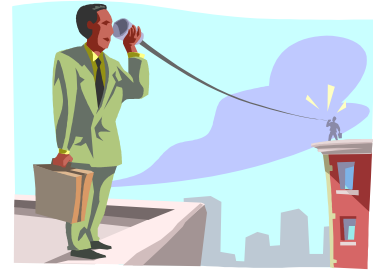
E-Mail Etiquette

The Rules of E-tiquette Engagement

1. Never use an e-mail when a phone call or in-person meeting is more appropriate.

Some discussions are better as a verbal event rather than an e-mail exchange. E-mail messages should never replace important face to face communications or phone calls between employees where those verbal discussions offer two-way, open dialog and the chance for better understanding of the message and its intent. Opt out of e-mailing if:

- You think there is emotion behind the e-mail you received, or will be in your reply
- You have any concerns about how the e-mail will be perceived by the recipient or others



2. Do not use e-mail to discuss sensitive or confidential information.

Sending an e-mail is like sending a postcard; it is out there for all to see. If you wouldn't want the content of your e-mail to be displayed on a bulletin board or published on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper, don't send it. And never make any libelous, biased or discriminating comments in e-mails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

3. Respond promptly.

E-mail is not as immediate as a telephone call; however, your customers and co-workers often send an e-mail and expect to receive a quick response. So when you have an e-mail that requires a response, one should be sent within 24 hours and preferably within the same working day. If your response requires more time than that, just send a reply saying that you have received the request and that you will follow up by a specific time.

4. Be clear, concise and to the point.

Don't make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Reading an e-mail is harder than reading a printed communication. If it is too long, your reader may end up printing it out anyway (save a tree!) or may not read it at all (Delete!). So get to the point. Don't ask or answer more than one question. But don't go overboard! Some messages get right to the point, perhaps a little too quickly. Don't forget to be polite and be specific.

5. Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.

If you don't answer all the questions in the original e-mail, you will probably receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions. This wastes your time and your reader's time and also causes unnecessary frustration. Plus, if you are able to pre-empt questions, your reader will see you as a pro-active, efficient, and thoughtful customer service provider. But keep #4 in mind. If there is more than one question, picking up the phone may be a better option.

E-Mail Etiquette

6. Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.

All too often those years in school learning proper usage is forgotten when we sit down to write an e-mail. Remember that improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of you and the County and can lead to misinterpretation of your message. Use your spell checking option, but don't completely rely on it. Proofread your e-mail or have someone else read it first (like your manger, *oops*, I mean manager). E-mails with no periods or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes change the meaning of the text. But don't get caught up in excessive punctuation!!! You'll often see e-mail messages with a half-dozen exclamation points at the end of a sentence for added emphasis. If you have something important to say, it should be reflected in your text, not in your punctuation.

7. Read and edit the e-mail before you send it.

Many people don't bother to read an e-mail before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in them. Apart from this, reading your e-mail through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments. Time can be your friend; use it wisely. Don't send the e-mail right away. Move on to something else and come back to it later. Re-read it then and see if you catch anything you missed before.

8. Do not write in CAPITALS.

WHEN YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. THIS CAN BE VERY ANNOYING AND CAN TRIGGER AN UNWANTED RESPONSE IN THE FORM OF A FLAME MAIL (see #9). THEREFORE, TRY NOT TO SEND E-MAIL MESSAGES IN CAPITALS. You may have also noticed they are much harder to read!

9. Don't go down in flames.

Flames are verbal attacks in electronic form. You may be flamed when you've sent an e-mail to a person that has caused that person to respond, and not in a nice way. Sometimes the reason for a flame is obvious (see #8), but sometimes you just don't know what caused it. Remember that tone is very difficult to decipher in an e-mail. You may sound angry to the recipient when that is not your intention. If you are concerned about the tone of your e-mail, read it out loud and listen for the emotion. On the other hand, you may indeed be angry but consider if starting a flame war will really help the situation (see #1). If you must vent, do it in another document like MS Word, never in e-mail. That way you can get it all out and not risk accidentally sending it off!



E-Mail Etiquette

10. Be prudent with the use of abbreviations and emoticons. 😊

In business e-mails, try not to overuse abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). All of your readers may not understand the meanings of the abbreviations and in most business e-mails they are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, like the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

11. Use formats, fonts and stationery carefully.

Remember that when you use formatting in your e-mails, the reader might not be able to view your formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. When using colors, use one that is easy to read on the background and if you use stationery, be sure it looks professional.

12. Do not attach unnecessary files.



Sending large attachments can annoy the recipients and overload their inboxes. Wherever possible, try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. A note on vCards (virtual business cards); these are a nuisance for Outlook users. They make every e-mail appear as if it has an attachment.

13. Do not overuse "Reply to All."

Only use "Reply to All" if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message. Overuse of this feature generates tons of unnecessary e-mails. For example, if I send a dozen people an e-mail asking if they are available for a meeting, I should expect to get a dozen replies. But if each person hits the "Reply to All" button, not only do I get a dozen replies, but so does everyone else. That's a total of 144 messages! Use with care.

14. To, Cc, and Bcc...What was the question?

The question was...What is my purpose in sending this e-mail to you?

- Am I directly addressing you? Do you need to do something with this? Your name should be in the "To" line.
- Am I indirectly addressing you? Is it an FYI? Your name should be in the "Cc" line.
- Do I want to hide the fact that I'm sending this to you from all the people in the "To" and "Cc" lines? Then you belong in the "Bcc" line. Use of the "Bcc" can be viewed as somewhat unethical, so proceed with caution in using this option.

Many users seem to have no idea that the "Cc" exists. They list every address in the "To" field even if the e-mail is only directed to one person. Many of the receivers don't know who should take action so either they all do something or they all do nothing (also see #s 13 & 15).

E-Mail Etiquette

But don't over do the "Cc" either. Copy only those who need to be copied. Try not to use the "Cc" unless the recipient knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. And when responding to a "Cc" message, do not include the people in the "Cc" field unless you have a particular reason for wanting them to see your response. Again, make sure that they understand why they are receiving a copy.

Then, there are users who never read the names of the people who receive a copy of an e-mail. For example, person 1 sends an e-mail to persons 2, 3 and 4. Person 4 immediately forwards it to 2 and 3 not bothering to see that person 1 already sent copies to them.

You may use the "Bcc" intending to protect the e-mail addresses of those with whom you are communicating in a mailing. However, if the "To" field is empty, it will look blank to your recipients and they might think your message is spam. To avoid this, use a mail merge and create one message for each recipient.

15. Do not send unauthorized messages to "All Users" type distribution lists.



If you are planning to send an e-mail to an "All Users" type of distribution list, be sure to check with your supervisor that you have permission to do so and have him or her check your message before it is sent. At the County, examples of these types of lists include the **Washoe County - All Email Accounts** distribution list and the **9th Street Employees** distribution list. The same rule of thumb applies to sending e-mails to a departmental distribution list such as **HR – Department**. When choosing a County e-mail address from the Outlook address book be sure to check that you have chosen correctly.

16. Use meaningful subject lines.

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as to you. For example, when you send an e-mail to co-workers with the subject line "Strategic Planning" they will not know that you are simply sending an interesting article on the strategic planning process. The subject line will take a lot of characters, so use it wisely: Interesting article on strategic planning; Agenda for Strategic Planning Meeting; Updated Strategic Plan for your review. Sometimes the subject line can say it all: Today's Strategic Planning Meeting moved to Conference Room B.

17. Don't overuse the "Importance: High" option!

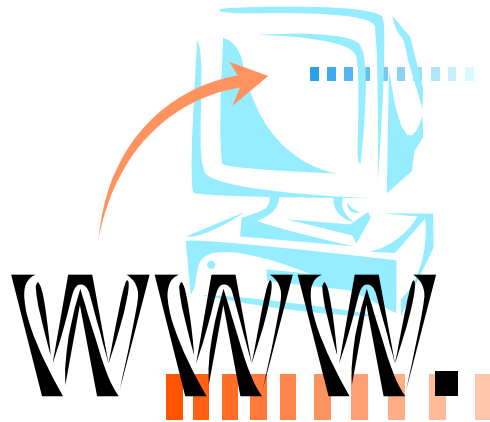
You know that story of the boy who cried wolf. If you overuse the Importance: High option, it will lose its meaning when you really need it. Also try to avoid the use of "Urgent" or similar words in your subject line (see #16). Only use this if it is a really urgent or important message. Did you know that you can also mark a message as low importance, for follow up, for your information, no response necessary and a few other

E-Mail Etiquette

things? The next time you are in Outlook click on the red exclamation point, blue down arrow and red flag and see what they can do.

18. Be sure to follow the County's Policy on Internet and Intranet Use.

Always remember that the technological tools we use at the County are provided to help us to get our work done efficiently, provide information to the public and other employees, and communicate with one another. Use is governed by carefully considered policies, procedures, and practices. We are obligated to use our systems wisely and ethically, and to adhere to the policy's limitations concerning personal (de minimis) use.



APPENDIX A

Washoe County Internet and Intranet Acceptable Use Policy

Background

The Internet is an electronic network that connects millions of computers throughout the world, providing communication and resource sharing services. Using the Internet, one can browse to seek relevant information; search databases of facts, books, and articles; access the latest economic statistics and government documents; connect to a computer on the other side of the world as if it were in the next room; transfer software programs, images, and other files; or communicate with one or many colleagues wherever they may be located.

The Washoe County Intranet is the internal computer network that offers Internet-like functions, allowing departments to maintain and access information that is not part of a public Internet presence. All references to "Internet" in this policy apply to the Intranet as well, except where the context otherwise requires.

These technologies offer excellent tools for local governments to get work done efficiently, provide public information, and communicate with constituents. However, the powerful nature of these tools requires that such usage be governed by carefully considered policies, procedures, and practices.

While specific technologies or procedures may change, Washoe County's Internet access will be managed according to the guidelines and procedures stated below. Based on their unique needs, departments may adopt additional provisions that do not conflict with this policy. If an objection is raised to a department's policy and cannot be resolved by the departmental Internet Coordinator and/or the department head, the Coordinator will refer the matter to the County Manager or his/her designee.

The policy below shall apply to all Washoe County officers and employees, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary, and also to all volunteer workers or contractors, or other users who may be given Internet privileges on County computers.

All data and other electronic messages within the County's system are the property of Washoe County.

Internet access

At the discretion of their department heads, employees may have access to a selection of Internet functions at their work sites. Each department head shall determine the classes within the department that may have Internet and/or Intranet access. Access, whether it is obtained through the County network or through other Internet service providers, shall be managed by departments through customary supervisory channels, and facilitated by a designated Internet Coordinator for each participating department. Before using the Internet, an employee shall sign a form (attached) acknowledging that he/she understands the Acceptable Use Policy;

E-Mail Etiquette

signed forms will be kept on file in the Human Resources Department. Employees are strongly encouraged to take advantage of relevant training opportunities. Any Internet usage by an employee on work time or using County equipment shall be done with both knowledge and approval of his/her supervisor. As with any other work, formal permission is required for any overtime or work performed off-site. In allocating staff time and use of computers, job responsibilities shall take priority over the professional uses outlined below.

Officers and employees' use of the Internet must comply with this policy.

Job-related and professional uses

To gain maximum benefits from the Internet, officers and employees are encouraged to:

- Use the County's Internet access to accomplish job responsibilities which may include gathering information about work-related problems, communicating with other agencies and vendors on job-related issues, and performing job-related research. Any purchases conducted over the Internet must comply with requirements and procedures developed by the Purchasing Department.
- Share job-related information, discoveries and questions with co-workers.
- As professional and skill development of County staff ultimately benefits Washoe County through increased efficiency and effectiveness, with permission of the appropriate appointing authority, employees may:
 - Use the Internet to learn its uses, practicing the various functions involved, and finding innovative ways to use networked resources to improve the delivery of County services and streamline internal County operations.
 - Use the County's Internet access during work hours to gather information to maintain currency in a field of knowledge which pertains to the employee's job description or assigned tasks, to participate in professional associations which pertain to the employee's job description or assigned tasks, and to communicate with colleagues in other organizations on job-related matters.

Personal uses

Under NRS 281.481 (7) and Washoe County Code section 5.340 (approved by the Board of County Commissioners on February 9, 1999, and as amended by Ordinance No. 1343 approved by the Board of County Commissioners effective July 22, 2002), personal use of governmental time, property, equipment or other facility is authorized on a limited and restricted basis. Limited personal use (de minimis use) and applicable limitations on such use apply to the use of County computers and Internet access. County code also provides that the personal use of county computers, does not create any expectation of privacy in that use by county officers, employees and other users.

E-Mail Etiquette

County code authorizes “limited use for personal purposes by county officers and employees of county property, equipment, or other facility if:

- (a) The use does not interfere with the performance of public duties including duties of both the officer/employee and other county staff, or interfere with the provision of county services;
- (b) The cost or value related to the use is nominal; and
- (c) The use does not create the “appearance of impropriety.”

The ordinance also provides that the limited use authorized does not prohibit the use of telephones and electronic mail (e-mail) if there is not a special charge for that use. If there is a special charge for that use, the use is not prohibited, but the officer or employee must reimburse the cost or pay the charge to the county unless the use is made necessary because the officer or employee is attending to county business.

The ordinance further states:

“Except as otherwise provided herein, a county officer or employee shall not use any county time, property, equipment, or other facility to benefit that officer’s or employee’s private business interests. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to: selling products for private business, solicitation related to private business or personal interests, mass mailings, keeping private business accounts, or similar uses. The county may provide access via computer to a bulletin board for use by county officers and employees. If provided, this section does not prohibit a county officer or employee from advertising on the county maintained bulletin board: personal items for sale so long as those items are not connected with a private business interest of the officer or employee, posting information regarding upcoming social events, or such other uses as may be permitted by the county through rules posted on the bulletin board web page.

“With the exception of use of county computers for electronic mail (e-mail), the personal use of county computers ... shall not exceed 30 minutes per workweek which may not occur during the officer’s or employee’s work time, which time may not be accumulated from week to week.

“For purposes of this section, use of computers is use of a county computer, to access Internet web sites, use of a modem from a non-county location to access a county computer, use of county owned software or computer programs, and use of county owned computer hardware to run personal software or programs. Notwithstanding the authorization for limited use of county computers, and personal use of county telephones and electronic mail (e-mail), county officers and employees shall not use county computers, telephones and electronic mail for personal use if the use would violate the provisions of paragraph (a), (b) or (c) of subsection 2 [of § 5.340 as set forth on page 3], or if the use would violate any county or department policies. Prohibited uses include, but are not limited to:

E-Mail Etiquette

(a) Interdepartmental e-mails to groups of persons regarding non-county community-wide projects or events or non-county social events;

(b) Non-county business uses which violate county policies on sexual harassment, discrimination and harassment, workplace violence, or other county policies.

(b) Non-county business uses which violate county policies on sexual harassment, discrimination and harassment, workplace violence, or other county policies.

“The county may adopt policies to implement and interpret the provisions of this section and to further prescribe, restrict or limit use of the county’s computer system. In addition, county department heads may adopt more restrictive policies on the use of county property, equipment or other facility than as set forth in this section, but department heads may not adopt less restrictive policies. A county department head who adopts a more restrictive policy than as set forth in this section, must file a copy of the policy with the human resources department. ...”

This Internet policy is adopted pursuant to the County code provision cited above. This policy interprets the provisions of County code and provides for further prescribed uses, restrictions and limitations. Employees are responsible for knowing and following the law and policies regarding personal use that apply to them.

As this section of the code allows personal use of county computers for 30 minutes per workweek of non-work time, upon compliance with this provision, it is the County policy to allow personal use to occur during an officer’s or employee’s meal period, but not rest breaks. An employee shall notify his or her supervisor when the employee’s personal use occurs during the employee’s authorized meal period.

Prohibited uses

Officers and employees are expressly forbidden to misuse any Internet or Intranet access privileges in ways that may include, but are not limited to:

- Uses that violate existing County policies, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, discrimination and harassment, workplace violence, or other adopted County policies. This prohibition would include viewing, transmitting, or downloading material that is sexually explicit, that creates a hostile work environment, or that promotes hatred or violence. This prohibition does not apply to County employees carrying out their assigned duties.
- Unlawful activities, including violations of copyright law (17 U.S. Code §101 et seq.), or activities that are malicious or have the effect of harassing other users.
- Attempting to gain access to computers or networks to which they do not have legitimate access, or violating the acceptable use policies of any network to which they connect.

E-Mail Etiquette

- Improperly accessing, reading, copying, misappropriating, altering, misusing, or destroying the information/files of other users.
- Misrepresenting the County's programs or policies in their communications.
- Violating security procedures (e.g., by sharing passwords with others, or by allowing non-employees to have access to "staff-only" functions, resources, or equipment).
- Installing or operating software that compromises computer security or introduces viruses into County systems.
- Installing or operating software that compromises computer security or introduces viruses into County systems.
- Using applications requiring excessive bandwidth such as Internet radio, music and video streaming unless such use is essential to the job function of that officer or employee, and is specifically approved by that officer's or employee's supervisor.
- Operating a server program (one that provides information to client programs via the World Wide Web, FTP, e-mail, or other Internet functions) without prior clearance from the Internet Working Group to ensure compliance with network design and security standards.
- Creating a public display of County information on the Internet, such as a departmental World Wide Web page, without prior notification to the County's E-Government Information Officer to ensure communication about graphic "look and feel," content, and web navigation. Updating files or making minor changes to existing material does not require such clearance.

Officers and employees should contact their designated Internet Coordinators whenever they need further guidance on acceptable and unacceptable uses of the Internet.

Violations of policy

Individual officers and employees are responsible for their conduct as Internet users and supervisors and managers are responsible for enforcing this policy. Unless required by law, Washoe County shall assume no liability or responsibility for, and shall not defend or indemnify an officer or employee against charges or claims resulting from, any action that is found to be in violation of any part of this policy.

As provided in County code, the County advises officers and employees that no legitimate expectation of privacy can be asserted in their use of the County's computer systems including, but not limited to, their use of the Internet whether the use is part of the officer or employee's personal, limited (de minimis) use or County related use as provided herein. All officers and employees will be required to log-on using their current network login and password after they click on the browser in order to achieve access to the Internet.

E-Mail Etiquette

Electronic auditing of Internet use; inspection, review and monitoring of Internet use and other employee computer files

As provided in County code, the County will electronically audit County network and servers connected to the Internet or other publicly accessible networks to support identification, termination, prosecution, and disciplinary action for unauthorized activity. Electronic audit mechanisms shall be capable of recording:

- Access to the system, including successful and failed login attempts, and logouts;
- Inbound and outbound file transfers;
- Web sites visited, including uniform resource locator (URL) of pages retrieved;
- Date, time, and user associated with each event.
- Web sites visited, including uniform resource locator (URL) of pages retrieved;
- Date, time, and user associated with each event.

The County will periodically and/or randomly inspect, review and monitor employees' computer files and Internet usage at any time to maintain system security and integrity, or to determine possible violations of policy or law. Periodic and random audit reports of Internet use by employees within their departments will be provided to Department heads.

County management, in consultation with designated Internet Coordinators, supervisors, and the appropriate technical staff, may review alleged violations of this policy on a case-by-case basis. Violation may result in cancellation of an individual's Internet access privileges. In addition, violations may result in appropriate legal action and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.