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Performance Standards & Best Practices

Subject: Computer Use & Electronic Communication Etiquette

Number: 014

This standard along with University of Alaska Board of Regents policy and regulations regarding information resources and computer usage will assist us in maintaining a stable and efficient computing system. This standard outlines the requirements for access and use of the UAF Facilities Services information systems, as well as computer communication etiquette.

UAF Facilities Services' information resources/computing systems are provided to department employees as a tool to aid them in their official duties and to support the mission of the university, as set forth in Board of Regents Policies and Regulations. Misuse of these resources is a violation of UA Policies and Regulations, and may be illegal.

Each FS computer (including its peripherals and software) that is connected to the network must be:

- approved through consultation with the FS IT System Administrator prior to purchase, installation, and use to ensure standards are met as well as system compatibility.
- added to the IT inventory and made available to be routinely tested and patched by IT staff.
- properly licensed. Copying, distributing and/or using software without proper licensing is a violation of federal copyright law.

The UAF Facilities Services computing system(s) may not be used:

- for personal profit or gain,
- to harass, threaten, or invade the privacy of others,
- to initiate or forward e-mail chain letters,
- to cause breaches of computer, network or telecommunications security systems,
- to initiate activities which unduly consume computing or network resources.

Furthermore, it is a violation of UA Policies and Regulations to provide, obtain, or use passwords to accounts other than one's own. Facilities Services retains ownership of all data, graphics, and files that are created, input, accessed, used, viewed, etc. through FS information systems. Consequently, users should have no expectation of privacy concerning FS systems or data. This includes UA email.

While Electronic mail (e-mail) enhances our ability to communicate efficiently with staff, vendors, and customers, these communications often lack the many benefits of face-to-face communication. The following guidelines will help staff convey a professional image and avoid unnecessary misunderstandings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Seef', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Subject line:

- Be sure to have a short subject that clearly indicates the topic of the email.
- Avoid using all caps or all lower case, as this could identify you with spammers.

Body:

- Be brief. Keep email communications short and simple.
- Stick to one subject. Use paragraph breaks to differentiate subject variations.
- Be careful when expressing mood or emotion. Misinterpretation of tone can lead to a flurry of insulting, inflammatory emails sent between users.
- Avoid sarcasm and humor, as it can often be misinterpreted.
- When writing to multiple addresses and requesting action, be clear what is expected of each recipient.

General Formatting:

- Use common courtesy. (Say hello, good day, thank you.)
- Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Generally avoid using abbreviations, acronyms and slang.
- Answer all questions when replying to an email.
- Be professional. Be polite. Avoid Emoticons (Smilies) and all caps.
- Avoid copying too many recipients. Copy only those that need to know.
- Email is not private. Read your messages before you hit send. Keep emails factual and only use information that would be acceptable in a public arena.

Remember, e-mails are a permanent record of communication that can be saved, copied, circulated, and printed. Misinterpreted e-mail messages can have a negative impact on work relationships and productivity.

Individuals who violate this computer use standard will be subject to disciplinary action and/or referral to law enforcement authorities when necessary. Office of Information Technology and/or FS IT personnel are authorized to monitor suspected violations and to examine items stored on any university storage medium.

Compliance with this standard does not ensure compliance with Regents' Policy, University Regulation or applicable law. In the event of a conflict between this standard and official policy, regulation or the law, the official source will govern.

To ensure effective communications, the FS Information Resources system administrator has established a help phone line, 474-7346, and an email help line: help@fs.uaf.edu

Supplemental information:

UA Board of Regents Policy & Regulations: <http://www.alaska.edu/bor/policy/02-07.doc>

OIT Acceptable Use of Online Resources: <http://www.alaska.edu/files/oit/OnlineResources.pdf>