

Policy # **01-01**
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Electronic Communication and Internet Use
Division of Criminal Justice Services

Approved By:
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for the VIBRS
Advisory Board

NOTE - This is a mandatory policy.

This policy applies to all classified, temporary and exempt employees of the Department of Public Safety, and other users of the VIBRS network. This policy is intended to be consistent with and reinforce the Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Electronic Communications and Internet Use" for State employees. Further, this policy applies to the use of the VIBRS Network and does not apply to local area networks. Local, county and federal agencies that are members of the VIBRS network must adhere to this policy.

1. Purpose and Policy Statement

1.1 The users of the VIBRS network receive Internet services from the State of Vermont. The State of Vermont purchases Internet services for use by State agencies and others to meet the operational and programmatic needs of their units. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for acceptable access and use and prohibits any Internet use by employees that violates Federal or State laws or regulations or other policies.

1.2 Internet services and e-mail capabilities are a resource to facilitate the work of government. Users shall not use, attempt to use State property or equipment for their private purposes without authorization. Allowances will be applied to Internet services and e-mail capabilities where personal use meets ALL of the following tests.

1.2.1 The use must not interfere with an employee's performance of job duties.

1.2.2 The use must not impose a burden on State resources as a result of frequency or volume of use.

1.2.3 The use must not otherwise violate this policy, including the prohibition on access of sites that include potentially offensive or disruptive material. The fact that the use occurs through the VIBRS Network in a private setting or outside of scheduled work hours does not affect this prohibition.

1.3 As defined by this policy, systems and information are state, local, county or federal property. All systems and information generated by the agency therein are, and shall remain, the property of each agency, subject to its sole control. All uses must comply with this policy. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to abridge any rights of an agency to control its systems, their uses or information except as otherwise provide for in other policies effecting usage of the VIBRS network.

1.4 This policy does not impair the right and obligations of agencies to limit access to systems and records that contain information that is subject to any statutory, regulatory, or common law privilege of obligations to limit access, nor does it alter any agency's rights or obligations under the Vermont public records law (1 VSA §315, et seq.)

1.5 Each agency has full control and access as defined below:

1.5.1 Control: An appointing authority of an agency reserves and intends to exercise all rights relating to their information/data. An agency may trace, review, audit, access, intercept, block, restrict, screen, delete, recover, restore, publish or disclose.

1.5.2 Access: Passwords, scramblers or various encryption methods may not be used without agency approval, access and control. No user may attempt to access, copy, forward, delete, or alter the messages of any other user without agency authorization. An agency system may not be used to attempt unauthorized access to any information system.

1.6 Definitions

1.6.1 "Agency" means a state board, commission, department, agency, or other entity or officer of state government, any unit of local, county or federal government.

1.6.2 "Agency systems" or "systems" means all agency software, electronic information devices, interconnections, intranet and technical information related to them. Systems include other systems accessed by or through those devices, such as the Internet, e-mail, or telephones services. Systems include designs, specifications, passwords, access codes and encryption codes for use through the VIBRS Network.

1.6.3 "Electronic communications" means electronic mail and Internet service access.

1.6.4 "Information" means information of any kind, used in any way, in agency systems. Examples include messages, communications, email, files, records, recordings, transmissions, signals, programs, macros, and data.

1.6.5 "User" any employee of an agency that is a member of the VIBRS Network and is assigned a login and password or otherwise has access to e-mail and Internet services through the VIBRS network.

2. Guidelines for General Use of Systems or Internet Services

2.1 User with access to systems or the Internet have the responsibility not to disclose their access codes or passwords.

2.2 No user shall send e-mail that is, or appears to be, sent from another user's e-mail or that attempts to mask identity.

2.3 All users of the VIBRS network must conform to reasonable professional standards for use of Internet services as detailed in this guideline. This includes a prohibition against any activity that impairs operation of any state computer resource. Such activities include, but are not limited to, sending junk mail or chain letters, inserting computer viruses or mass mailings via e-mail.

2.4 Users of the VIBRS network must respect intellectual property rights at all times when obtaining information over the Internet. Copyrighted or licensed information shall be used only with full legal right to do so.

2.5 Use of the Internet is for governmental business. The only exception is for personal use that fully complies with the limited personal use described by this policy. Any use that is not for governmental business or authorized limited personal use consistent with this policy may result in revocation of Internet access, other appropriate administrative action, or disciplinary or corrective action as deemed necessary by the agency. Sanctions contained in the VIBRS User Policy #95-3 Section 13 may apply.

2.6 Inappropriate reference to race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, religions, national origin or disability is prohibited.

2.7 Agencies have the right to monitor the systems and Internet activities of users. Monitoring may occur, but is not limited to, occasions when there is a reason to suspect that a user is involved in activities that are prohibited by law, violate State policy or regulations, or jeopardize the integrity and/or performance of the computer systems of State government, and the VIBRS network.

2.7.1 Monitoring may also occur in the normal course of network administration and trouble-shooting, or on random basis.

2.7.2 Agencies must ensure that systems administrators and technicians involved in monitoring, or who otherwise have access to systems and records that contain information that is subject to statutory, regulatory, or common law privilege or obligation to limit access, are appropriately trained on the requirement to respect such privilege or confidentiality and directed to do so.

2.8 Use of agency systems or printers for offensive or disruptive purposes through the VIBRS Network is prohibited. Prohibited activities also include, but are not limited to the following:

2.8.1 Lobbying public officials or asking others to lobby in their behalf.

2.8.2 Using or allowing others to use State Internet services or e-mail accounts to conduct transactions or advertising for a personal profit-making business is strictly forbidden.

2.8.3 Using profanity, vulgarity, character slurs or material having sexual content is prohibited.

2.8.4 Printing and/or distributing information from the Internet that is obscene, potentially offensive, harassing or disruptive.

The following language was added and approved by the VIBRS Advisory Board at the April 7, 2004 meeting. This policy is intended to be consistent with and reinforce the Personnel Policies and Procedures, Number 11.7, "Electronic Communications and Internet Use" for State employees. This language was not deemed to be of such a significant change that would require warning. This policy was originally adopted on June 6, 2001.