FOREST PRESERVES of Cook County	Title: **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY USAGE POLICY**	
Subject: **GENERAL OPERATIONS**	**Page:** 1 of 12	**Policy Number:** 03.40.00
Category: **DISTRICTWIDE POLICY**	**Approval Date:** 08/01/2013	**Last Revised Date:** 01/22/2021

POLICY STATEMENT:

This Electronic Communications and Technology Usage Policy ("Policy") is intended to govern, and provide guidance with respect to, the use of Electronic Communications and various other technology resources controlled by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the "District").

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish the policies, standards, and procedures to ensure that employees understand the guidelines governing the usage of Electronic Communications and Technology Resources. This policy also provides guidelines to help District employees following strategic internal and external communications and printing best practices (Appendix A and Appendix B).

AFFECTED AREAS:

This policy applies to all District employees and all others individuals who may use District electronic communications or technology ("*User" or "Users"*). The District reserves the right to change or modify this policy or any related policies or standards at any time, for any reason, at the absolute discretion of the District.

DEFINITIONS:

Electronic Communications: Electronic Communications include equipment and systems which include, but is not limited to, electronic mail (e.g., "Outlook" or other e-mail programs that may be installed), the Internet, Intranet, fax, and voice mail.

Technology Resources: Technology Resources include various technology resources such as computer software, hardware, data, bases or on-line services computers, laptops, electronic notebooks, cell phones, smart phones and printers purchased, leased, owned or otherwise controlled by the District.

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:

1) **Authorized Use:** Use of District Electronic Communications and/or Technology Resources are for District business purposes only. While limited personal use of District Electronic Communications and/or telephone is permitted—as long as it does not impact a User's duties and the personal use is kept at a minimum—it is strongly recommended that Users do not use District Electronic Communications and/or Technology Resources for personal reasons. In addition, any personal files and/or information stored on District Electronic Communications systems and/or Technology Resources are considered property of the District and are subject to this Policy.

2) **Unauthorized Use:** Except as set forth in section A, *supra*, use of the District Electronic Communications and/or Technology Resources for non- District purposes, including, but not limited to, entertainment; personal profit; operation of a personal business or other profit use; partisan electioneering

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or other political activities; or violation of local, state, federal, or international law constitutes unauthorized use and may subject User to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment with the District. Unauthorized use may also subject the user to a civil lawsuit, fines, and/or criminal prosecution by appropriate legal or law enforcement authorities.

3) <u>**User Communications:**</u> Users should comply with the following rules pertaining to communications:

a. Emails must comply with the Cook County Rules of Conduct, including refraining from containing vulgar language, vulgar/inappropriate pictures, threats, disparaging language, racial insensitive or sexual comments;

b. Users are not allowed to harass or spam an individual via Electronic Communications;

c. Users are prohibited from using Electronic Communications and/or Technological Resources to transmit any communication that is discriminatory or harassing to any individual (*including emails/communications with offensive comments about race, gender, gender identity, disabilities, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious beliefs and practice, political beliefs, national origin, etc.);*

d. Employees shall use the standard signature guidelines established by the Communications Department and refrain from including non-professional profile pictures, non-standard and nonwhite background stationary, or any other graphics, outside of approved District branding, in their emails.

   <u>**Additional Guidelines:**</u>

   1. <u>**Profile Pictures:**</u> Profile pictures should be either: **(1)** a headshot of the employee in professional attire; **(2)** a photo of employee in FPCC attire; and/or **(3)** a photo of a native plant or animal.

   2. <u>**Email Footers/Approved Template:**</u> Signatures and footers should be included on employee emails and should comply with the guidelines established by the Communications Division.

   3. <u>**Email Footers/Pronouns:**</u> Employees may also list preferred pronouns. (*ex. she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/them, etc.*)

   4. <u>**Temporary Email Footers Providing Notice of Important Dates:**</u> District Directors may approve temporary footers which provide notice of important upcoming events *(such as permits opening day)*. These informational notices should be promptly removed when they are no longer needed.

   5. <u>**Email Footers/Ribbons:**</u> District employees may request an exception from the standard guidelines; exceptions must be approved by the Deputy General Superintendent. Examples of previously approved exceptions include ribbons to promote awareness of breast cancer, domestic violence, heart disease, and other pressing public health issues.

   6. <u>**Email Footers/Notices of Privileged Information:**</u> Staff from the Legal Department may include a "notice of privileged information". Staff not in the Legal Department should not include this notice in their email footers.

7. **Email Footers/Inspirational Quotes:** Inspirational, motivational, and other quotes are not allowed on email footers.   <u>For More Information</u>: Please contact your Department Head.

e. Communications should be handled in an efficient, business-like, and cost-effective manner. Judgment and discretion must be used whenever sending Electronic Communications. Users must not monopolize District Technology Resources.

f. <u>Users shall not utilize Electronic Communications</u>: for any purpose which infringes on intellectual property rights, including, but not limited to, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, license agreements and patents; or violates any applicable law, regulation, license, or policy.

4) **User Responsibilities and Standards:** Users must comply with all license agreements and policies of networks and on-line services made available on the District network.

a. Users must not engage in software piracy, copy or share any software on the District network.

b. Users shall not make unauthorized changes to, or install, unauthorized hardware or software on any component of the network. Only the District IT Department or its authorized agents may modify or install any hardware or software. Users shall not access any external networks or information resources or utilize any District Technology Resources without proper authorization.

c. Users must not make any statement or conduct any activity that may give rise to any liability on the part of the District and must not make any statement that binds the District to a contract without prior authorization.

d. Users must not disclose confidential or proprietary information without express authorization to do so.

e. Users must not permit unauthorized individuals access to District Electronic Communications and/or Technology Resources.

f. Users must keep passwords, authorization codes and IDs private, but must provide them to the District when requested. Accounts, passwords, authorization codes or IDs are not to be shared. No User has authority to delegate authorized use to another User except under authorization by the IT Department.

g. Users must not create a personal website, webpage, or home page on the District network.

h. Users must not utilize encryption technology in connection with the District Electronic Communications and/or Technology Resources unless expressly authorized by the District.

i. Users must not forge any electronic communication or forward any communication that attempts to hide or alter the identity of the sender/forwarder or represent the sender/forwarder as someone else.

j. Users must not hack into other systems, crack passwords, or otherwise breach computer or network security measures.

    k. Users must not monitor Electronic Communications of other Users or third parties except under explicit authorization of the General Superintendent.

    l. <u>Data Storage:</u> Users should store all their work materials in either the (H:\) Home drive - One Drive, SharePoint, an Outlook Account, and/or the (S:\)- Shared Drive. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by their Department Head and the Information Technology Department.

5) <u>Strategic Use of Emails:</u> The District has established the following guidelines to improve productivity and encourage time each week for focused, uninterrupted thought:

    a. Users should limit the number of people copied on emails.

    b. Users should not forward emails unless strictly necessary.

    c. Users should cut off email chains. (*For instance, after two exchanges, reply with "I'll give you a call," then pick up the phone and resolve the issue.*)

    d. Users should limit Electronic Communication use on weekends. Unless it is an emergency, staff should not feel compelled to respond to internal weekend emails <u>NOTE</u>: this guideline does not apply to Users whose normal work schedule is on the weekend.

    e. Users should keep calendars up to date and utilize Outlook to check schedules and set up meetings.

    f. Users should not engage in internal emails on Friday mornings unless necessary.

6) <u>Email Blast Policy:</u> Department Heads/Senior Staff, and/or other direct reports to the General Superintendent and/or Deputy Superintendent, must approve all mass District email communications originating from requests from any of their subordinates. Users must submit requests to send mass emails in accordance with this policy unless otherwise directed to do so by their Department Head.

    a. <u>The content of a mass email should be related to:</u>
- District business;
- The District mission, initiatives, events, or programs;
- An emergency/safety related matter; and/or
- Some other nature/environmental purpose, unless otherwise directed or approved by the Offices of the President or the General Superintendent. Employees are prohibited from utilizing District email addresses for personal use.

      <u>Note</u>: Exceptions may be allowed at the direction/approval of the President, and/or the General Superintendent, and/or his/her designee.

    b. <u>The procedure shall be as follows:</u>
- Requester creates a draft email and forwards same to their his/her Department Head/Senior Staff member for review and approval; and,
- After receiving approval requester may send the blast email.

7) <u>**Physical Security and Care of District Issued Equipment:**</u> Users with District Technology Resources must take reasonable precautions, with assuming direct control of the device. Users are responsible for general care of all equipment issued by the District. The IT department should be informed of any broken devices immediately. Upon resignation or termination, Users are responsible for the return of all assigned Technology Resources to the IT department.

8) <u>**Viruses and Malware:**</u> All computer viruses and malware must be reported immediately to IT. IT is responsible for updating virus detection software from time to time and providing detailed guidelines in the event of a major problem. IT will investigate any infection and must receive the full cooperation of all Users.

9) <u>**Compliance:**</u>

   a. <u>Audit and Review:</u> The District reserves the right to access, audit, review, delete, disclose or use all Electronic Communications, including any digitized information that may be made available on the network, and other information stored or transferred on District systems at any time without notice and without recourse regardless of the information contents, subject only to provision of applicable law.

   b. <u>Disciplinary Action for Violation:</u> Violation of this Policy or any related policies or standards may be grounds for corrective action up to and including termination of employment of employees, or termination of the contract(s) and/or relationship of an outside User with the District, regardless of whether the User was an authorized User or not. In addition, some violations may result in civil liability and/or criminal prosecution by appropriate authorities.

   c. <u>Reporting Unauthorized Use:</u> Authorized employees and/or Users must report any violations or suspected violations of this Policy or any related policies or standards to their supervisor, Department Head, Human Resources Department, or IT Department as soon as they become aware of it.

RESPONSIBILITY:

The Information Technology Department: The Information Technology Department ("IT") shall be responsible for ensuring User compliance with this policy.

Supervisors: Supervisors shall be responsible for: **(1)** Periodically reminding Users about this policy and when appropriate; **(2)** Returning technology related devices (such as laptops, tablets, and mobile phones) to the IT when a User leaves District employment or at the request of the IT.

Human Resources Department: The Human Resources Department is responsible for informing IT: **(1)** when a User is off-boarding; and **(2)** prior to on-boarding a User.

Department Heads: Department Heads shall: **(1)** review and, if necessary and appropriate, approve employee blast emails; and **(2)** comply with this policy.

District Employees: All Users are required to comply with this policy.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

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N/A

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

1) This policy should be distributed to all staff.
2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.
3) Department Heads should work to ensure that their staff are knowledgeable about this policy.

REFERENCES:

Illinois' Local Records Act (50ILCS 205/)

Cook County Rules & Regulations
Rules of Conduct: Pages 20-23

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Employee Handbook Use of District Property Section: Page 17

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Employee Handbook Rules of Conduct Section: Pages 20-23

POLICY LEAD: Anthony D. Tindall
                                                 Policy & Sustainability Manager

APPROVAL: Arnold Randall
                                                 General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

Approved: 08/01/2013
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Revised: 1/22/2021

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Office of the General Superintendent
69 W. Washington St., Suite 2040, Chicago, IL 60602
Email: FPD.Policy@cookcountyil.gov

APPENDIX A:
Internal & External Communications Guidelines

PURPOSE: The Forest Preserves values developing and maintaining an effective, consistent, po relationship with our stakeholders, users, and employees. The purpose of these guidelines is to help F Preserve employees following strategic internal and external communication best practices.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS:

A. Effective Communication Tips:
1. Use standard terminology when communicating information.
2. Request and provide clarification when needed.
3. Ensure statements are direct and unambiguous.
4. Inform the appropriate individuals when the mission or plans change.
5. Communicate all information <u>needed</u> by those individuals or teams external to the team.
6. Use nonverbal communication appropriately.
7. Use proper order when communicating information.

B. Response Timeframe: (Emails & Telephone Calls)
1. <u>Internal</u>: Forest Preserves employees should strive to respond to, or at least acknowledge rece fellow Forest Preserves employee correspondence, if necessary and/or appropriate, within tw four hours (24), but no longer than five (5) business days.
2. <u>External</u>: The Forest Preserves recognizes a best practice of trying to respond to external cons correspondence within two business days (48 hours).
3. <u>Out of Office:</u> Please refer to D-9.

C. Principles of Good Writing:
1. Know your objective & audience. *(What specifically do you want the reader to know/think/do?)*
2. Make a list. *(Write down the ideas/points you want to cover.)*
3. Organize your ideas. *(Importance, Chronology, Problem/Solution, Question/Answer)*
4. Separate main ideas. (A new thought requires a new paragraph.)
5. Use bullets or numbers when appropriate.
6. Write for brevity and use short sentences. *(According to the American Press Institute, sentences with 15 words are understood 90% of the time & sentences with eight or fewer words are understood 100% of the time*
7. Use only abbreviations that are easily understood.
8. Edit your work. *(Proof it yourself and have at least one other person edit it as well.)*

D. Email Tips:
1. Communication via email will be conducted in a professional and courteous manner.
2. The email will be clear, informative and timely.

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3. Your email should be checked frequently.

4. Read email carefully and respond in a timely manner.

5. Delete Unsolicited advertisements without response.\

6. Remember to include your signature (*name, title, department, Forest Preserve Email, phone number, email)* to all external emails

7. Provide clear detail in the subject line.

8. If the email message sent directly to you requires a response from someone else, acknowledge you have received the email message and note that you are going to forward it to the appropriate person to handle the request. Include the person's name and email address in your email res Always include a closing sentence in your email message, giving them options to contact you need additional assistance

9. *Out of Office:* If you plan to be away from your office, (i.e. out longer than normal, on benefit off, or some other administrative leave) your email should reflect that schedule in an "Out of O notification.

    i Example: Out of office reply: Thank you for your email. I am out of the office from [DAY, DATE] to [DAY, DATE] and unable to respond at this time. I will review your message following my on [DAY, DATE]. If you need immediate assistance, contact [NAME, PH#, EMAIL ADDR

10. Outlook Calendar Invitation: Employees should strive to reply to all outlook meeting inv requests *(Accept, Decline, Tentative*) within twenty-four hours (24).

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E. Telephone Tips:

1. General Considerations: All telephone calls shall be answered promptly and in a professional, courteous manner. Answering the telephone is every employee's responsibility throughout the Preserves. When answering the phone, use a friendly, professional manner. Our greeting is th impression we give our guests. Speak with a warm, welcoming tone. Identify yourself and your and/or Department. Imagine you are the caller and answer the phone in the way that you want to be treated as a customer.

2. Difficult Callers: Sometimes callers are unintentionally, or for a multitude of reasons intent less than courteous in their request or communication. They may interrupt and be rude. Preserves employees should remain calm, friendly, empathetic, and cooperative. Be an active li Keep an open mind and make sure you understand what the caller needs or is requesting. Cl necessary. Do not hesitate to ask the caller questions to understand the goal or intent of the Take notes if necessary.

3. Phone Transfers: Transfer calls as appropriate, but do not transfer a person unnecessarily. E to the caller briefly if you are unable to assist him or her and let the caller know you would transfer them. Have the caller's approval before transferring the caller to the appropriate p Whenever possible, give the name of the person you are transferring the caller to as well person's telephone number. If you need to search for the proper person, get the caller's information so you can get back to them. Always be sure to follow through on a commitment. make a promise to follow up or to find someone else to assist with a guest request, ensure that it is closed.

4. Research information for the caller's inquiry, give him/her the option to either hold or explain will get back with the caller when you have the information. If the caller chooses to remain on two minutes on hold is the maximum amount of time that should occur without returning caller for updates. If the

caller prefers that you call him or her back, indicate the timeframe in the caller may expect your call. Always thank the caller for waiting.

5. <u>Calls Directed to Employee Voicemail:</u> Callers should not be transferred directly to a voice m without first requesting the caller's approval. Give the caller the correct telephone number a name of the person on the other line. Briefly explain to the caller why this other person is suitable to answer this question or request.

6. <u>Voice Mails:</u> Voice mail greetings must be professional, current and updated when appropriate. Greetings should indicate name, position, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and an option for contacting someone in person. Voice mail shall be checked frequently during business hour calls shall be returned promptly.

F. **In-Person Customer Service Tips:**

1. Communication in person will be executed in a professional and courteous manner to both in and external customers.

G. **Effective Meeting Tips:**

1. <u>Don't Meet</u>: Avoid a meeting if the same information could be covered in a memo, e-mail, brief report, and/or on the intranet or shared drive.

2. <u>Set Meeting Objectives:</u> Set out what you hope to achieve before the meeting. The more concrete your meeting objectives, the more focused your agenda will be.

3. <u>Provide an Agenda Beforehand:</u> Provide all participants with an agenda before the meeting starts. The agenda should include: a list of the topics to be covered; a list stating who will address each topic; the time, date and location of the meeting; and, any background information participants will need to know to hold an informed discussion on the meeting topic. *(What's the most important thing you should do with your agenda? Follow it closely!)*

4. <u>Frequently Held Meetings:</u> For frequently held meetings such as a weekly status meeting on a project, you can save time by creating a meeting template. Once you have that in place, preparing an agenda becomes a matter of filling in the blanks.

5. <u>Manage The Meeting By The Clock</u>: Watching the clock is important in an effective meeting. When nobody takes charge of managing time, it is easy to become careless and unfocused.

6. <u>Meeting Organizers</u>: Starting the meeting on time and ending on time (or a few minutes early!) will quickly enhance your reputation as an organized person. If you are running a large or complex meeting, consider asking a colleague to serve as time keeper.

7. <u>Meeting Attendees</u>: Start by arriving early at the meeting (5 minutes for in person meetings and 1-2 minutes before for conference calls). That means avoiding back to back commitments on your calendar whenever possible.

1. <u>Assign Action Items</u>: Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it. Listen for key comments that flag potential action items and don't let them pass by without addressing them during the meeting. Assigning tasks and projects as they arise during the meeting means that your follow-through will be complete.

2. <u>Examine Your Meeting Process</u>: Assign the last few minutes of meetings as time to review the following questions: What worked well in this meeting? What can we do to improve our next meeting? Remember – don't leave the meeting without assessing what took place and making a plan to improve the next meeting!

3. <u>Follow-Up On The Meeting</u>: Following up in a timely basis is a great way to manage stress and make a good impression on others. For the best results, follow up (e.g. making a phone call, writing an email, etc.) the same day as the meeting. For very important matters, make a note on your calendar or task management tool of choice to continue following up until you reach a resolution.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For more information please contact your supervisor and/or Department Head.

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Appendix B:
Print Management Guidelines

PURPOSE: The District is undertaking cost reduction initiatives that include reduction of costs associated with printing and print management. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for more sustainable, efficient and cost-effective printing management in the District.

SCOPE: All District owned and operated Information Technology devices.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE:

1) **Document Standards:**
   a. Document templates that use color in the template format shall be replaced with non-color (*black & white/grayscale*) templates.
   b. Document templates, notably briefing templates, that utilize light text on dark backgrounds, or have other toner-intensive shading, backgrounds, or designs, shall be replaced with new templates that utilize dark text on white backgrounds, and other minimalist designs.
   c. Printing on multi-function device (*MFD*) printers is less costly than printing using desktop printers. Users who have desktop printers under an approved exception must use MFP Shared printers when possible, particularly for higher volumes of printing, and should use their desktop printer only when necessary.

2) **Desktop Printers:**
   a. Desktop printers, defined as a printer directly connected to a computer or a networked printer that serves only a single user ("*personal printer*"), shall **(1)** no longer be purchased, and **(2)** will no longer be serviced, unless authorized by the Chief Financial Officer and/or his/her designee. The current inventory of personal printers will be strategically reduced in accordance to this policy, and other green/sustainability best practices.

   b. **Configuration Procedures:**
      ○ Users shall have their computers configured to print to a networked multi-function device (*MFD*) for printing.
      ○ For existing printers, copiers, and multi-function devices, and as new ones are purchased and deployed, IT shall ensure that:
        ✦ Device defaults and network print drivers are set per the same default configuration standards described above *(draft quality, black/white/grayscale, duplex printing by default)*; and,
        ✦ Devices have Energy Star and/or other power saving modes enabled.

   c. **Purchasing Standards:**
      ○ Printers that do not meet the standards provided in this policy, including non-duplex capable devices and single-user devices, shall not be purchased without IT's Approval.

- ○ Printers, copiers, and/or multi-function devices shall not automatically be replaced when they break or reach end of life. Before replacement, users must assess whether it is necessary to replace the device or whether other devices can satisfy the users' business needs, and also if more economical options are available.
- ○ Some copier maintenance agreements charge for toner based on total page counts without distinguishing between color vs. black and white printing. Such agreements should be avoided.

3) **Employee & IT Guidance:**
   a. Implementation of local printing standard configurations will be verified through a checklist-based process, with additional guidance to be issued separately.
   b. An internal inventory validation process is being conducted to establish the current footprint (*quantity, types, locations, capabilities*) of printing devices.
   c. Verification of individual user printing requirements will also be done through a checklist-based process.
   d. As devices are identified as no longer being needed, they should be repurposed when appropriate. For example, a newer printer can be used to replace an older model which could then be salvaged. Rather than salvaging a duplex-capable printer, that printer can be used to replace a non-duplex capable printer which can then be salvaged. Rather than salvaging a printer that has several spare toner cartridges, that printer can be used to replace a different printer that lacks spare cartridges to reduce the cost of future toner purchasing.
   e. Individual users shall verify that their equipment is consistent with this policy.
   f. Supervisors shall ensure effective communications, compliance, and accountability for staff compliance with this Policy.
   g. Senior Staff/Department Heads shall ensure that purchasing of printing devices by their offices is done in accordance with this Policy.
   h. IT will provide assistance to users as needed to configure their printing defaults and add access to network based printing devices.

4) **Exceptions:** Approved exceptions to allow desktop ("*personal*") printers will be considered in the following situations:
   a. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodated, or other District reasonable accommodation, exception that has been approved by the Department of Human Resources.
   b. Isolated locations that lack access to networked printers in a reasonable proximity.
   c. Individuals who print significant amounts of sensitive information, and where use of secure printing to an MFD is not practical.
   d. Users of computers that are not currently and cannot be placed on a network, and who need the ability to print from those non-networked computers.
   e. Any exceptions must have documented justifications.