

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA**



Jon E. DeGuilio, Chief Judge  
Robert N. Trgovich, Clerk of Court

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**Internet Policy**

June 2020

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The United States District Court has adopted this policy to set forth guidelines for the authorized and intended use of the Internet. These guidelines apply to all Court employees and officers who use the Court’s computing resources.

**I. Generally**

Employees who are authorized to use the Internet must make sure that they use the Internet safely and productively and not in any way that could compromise the interests of the judiciary. These guidelines apply to all Internet services, including but not limited to electronic mail and web browsers.

Access to the Internet is possible through the DCN. As part of the security system of the DCN’s Internet gateway, a log is kept of all Internet activity passing through the DCN. If an individual accesses an Internet site or sends an electronic message through the DCN’s Internet gateway, the fact that this activity originated from the United States Courts will be known by the receiving site or party. Inappropriate access could therefore be an embarrassment to the judiciary.

**II. Acceptable Uses**

Employees accessing the Internet must adhere to the same code of ethics that governs all other aspects of Judiciary employee activity. Employees may not use the Internet for other than authorized activities. Personal use of the Internet is permitted as set forth in section C below. Only those employees specifically granted Internet access through the DCN may use that access. Authorized employees are not to share this capability with anyone.

1. Employees are specifically prohibited from using the Internet for the following purposes:
  - (a) Sending data or files or mail over the Internet that contain any discriminatory statements that malign;
  - (b) Making unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind that might be perceived as binding the government;

- (c) Sending confidential information over the Internet. The Internet is not a secure means of transmission and can cause confidential information to be compromised should it be read by an unauthorized party;
  - (d) Taking part in Internet discussion forums that are not associated with official government business;
  - (e) Posting opinions on the Internet to forums that are personal in nature;
  - (f) Using the network connection for commercial or political purposes or for private gain;
  - (g) Using the network for illegal activities;
  - (h) Intentionally accessing sites that contain images of an obscene or sexually explicit nature, except insofar as such access is related to the employee's responsibilities.
2. Improper use or distribution of information is prohibited. This includes copyright violations such as software piracy. The judiciary may incur a legal liability for unauthorized copying of files or software even if the copy is used for official business.
  3. Employees should show respect for intellectual property and creativity by giving appropriate credit when files or portions of files are used while carrying out official duties.
  4. Employees should refrain from any practices that might jeopardize the judiciary's computer systems and data files when downloading files from the Internet.

### **III. Personal Use of Internet Services**

An employee who uses the Internet on personal time enhances his or her knowledge of electronic information resources and gains skills in information technology. This knowledge and skill will make the employee more efficient and effective in using the Internet for court business. Also, by encouraging employees to explore the Internet, the Court builds its pool of Internet literate staff who can then guide and encourage those around them in Internet use.

With this in mind, employees may make limited use of the Internet on personal time if such use does not interfere with the employees' ability to promptly and efficiently perform their official job duties. Any non-official use of the Internet during work hours will be treated similar to a "personal telephone call," and should be kept to a minimum. Employees are to refrain from accessing high band-width activities, e.g. downloading videos during business hours. More

extensive personal use of the Internet is authorized outside of normal business hours. In any non-official use, employees should exercise discretion keeping in mind that such use, whether during or outside business hours, is monitored and traceable to the Court and by the Court to individual users.

#### **IV. Misuse of Internet Services**

Employees should be aware that anyone using court computing resources expressly consents to monitoring of such resources and employees are advised that if monitoring reveals possible evidence of criminal activity, information systems personnel will provide the evidence obtained from such monitoring to law enforcement officials. Connection to the Internet is a privilege and not a right. Employees are reminded that they bear sole responsibility for material they send, access, or display on the Internet or in electronic mail and that willful violations of the guidelines in this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### **V. Use of Electronic Mail**

Any employee with a current Court e-mail account may use such accounts to send and receive Internet electronic mail if they follow the acceptable use provisions outlined above.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

By signing this agreement, I understand and agree to abide by this policy. I understand that failure to sign this acknowledgment will result in denial of access to the judiciary's network systems. I understand that once I sign below, any violation of this policy may constitute grounds for discipline and/or criminal prosecutions. I understand that Internet use and electronic mail services may be monitored and that I am consenting to monitoring. I understand that should I commit a violation or knowingly assist another person in violation of this policy, my access privileges may be restricted or revoked or other disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may be taken against me.

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_