

HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER HANDBOOK OF OPERATING PROCEDURES

Chapter 5	Information Management & Services	Effective:	June 2000
Section 5.2	Systems and Network Operations	Revised:	July 2010
Policy 5.2.6	Electronic Mail Use and Retention	Responsibility:	Vice President and Chief Information Officer

ELECTRONIC MAIL USE AND RETENTION

Acceptable Use

Electronic mail (e-mail) is an official and expected communication form to conduct University business. As such, all faculty, staff, and students will be issued a University e-mail address and account for electronic communication supporting our education, research, and service missions.

E-mail messages created, received, retained, used, or disposed of using any Health Science Center electronic mail system are considered official state documents. Users of e-mail are expected to be ethical and responsible in their use. Faculty, staff, and students are expected to make efficient use of computing resources. Wasteful and disruptive activities, such as sending chain letters, broadcast messages, or other unwanted material is a misuse of University resources. An unwanted message may be perceived by the recipient as abusive, threatening, or harassing, especially if repeated. Such communications may be considered a breach of Health Science Center policies and state law.

Information classified as “Confidential/High Risk” data must be encrypted if it is not sent to a mail address of “username@uthscsa.edu”. (See the *Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP)*, Section [11.1.12](#), “E-Mailing Protected Health Information”.) Instructions for securing e-mail are at [Secure Email](#).

E-mail is provided to facilitate state and University business; however, brief and occasional e-mail messages of a personal nature (so called “incidental” use) may be sent and received if the following guidelines and restrictions are met:

1. Personal use of e-mail is a privilege, not a right. As such, the privilege may be revoked at any time and for any reason. Abuse of the privilege may result in appropriate disciplinary action.
2. All e-mail can be recorded and stored along with the source and destination.
3. Employees have no right to privacy with regard to e-mail. Management has the right to view employees’ e-mail.

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4. E-mail messages are the property of the State of Texas. Management has the right to review employees' messages. Also, e-mail messages are subject to the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act and the laws applicable to state records retention (See Records Retention below).
 5. Employees should be aware that when sending an e-mail message of a personal nature, there is always the danger of the employees' words being interpreted as official University policy or opinion. Employees are responsible for clearly expressing in their personal correspondence that their statements and opinions do not represent official Health Science Center policy.
 6. Personal e-mail should not impede the conduct of University business.
 7. Racist, sexist, threatening, or otherwise objectionable language is strictly prohibited.
 8. E-mail should not be used to conduct a "private" business for personal monetary interests or gain.
 9. Employees should limit subscription to mailing lists for personal use consistent with "incidental" use.
 10. Personal e-mail should not cause the state to incur a direct cost in addition to the general overhead of e-mail.
 11. This policy applies to e-mail used with the Health Science Center and e-mail used conjointly with the Internet, and does not supersede any state or federal laws, or any other Health Science Center policies regarding confidentiality, information dissemination, or standards of conduct.

Record Retention

As official documents, e-mail must be maintained in accordance with state mandated record retention requirements. However, electronic mail messages are not considered one record type for retention purposes. The content and function of the e-mail message determines the retention period for that message.

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Central e-mail servers are backed-up each night and back-up tapes are maintained for two weeks. These procedures are in place for emergency restoration of e-mail services and do not meet record retention standards.

It is the user's responsibility, with guidance and training from the Records Management Officer, to manage e-mail messages according to the [Records Retention Schedule](#).

As a general rule, it is the responsibility of the sender of e-mail messages with the Health Science Center's e-mail system and recipients of the messages received from outside the Health Science Center to retain the messages for the approved retention period.

E-mail generally, but not always, falls within the following common record series categories (each with a distinct retention requirement):

1. Transitory Information, 1.1.057 – Records of temporary usefulness that are not an integral part of a records series of an agency, that are not regularly filed within an agency's record keeping system, and that are required only for a limited period of time for the completion of an action by an official or employee of the Health Science Center, or in preparation of an on-going records series. Retention: AC (after purpose of record has been fulfilled).
2. Administrative Correspondence, 1.1.007 – Subject to archival review. Retention: 3 years.
3. General Correspondence, 1.1.008 – Retention: 1 year.

For assistance on e-mail classification for record retention purposes, consult the "Records Retention Schedule Web site" and view "Records Retention Guidance for E-mail" (<http://www.library.uthscsa.edu/university/recordsRRS.cfm>).

For more information on record retention issues related to e-mail, including approved retention methods, consult the HOP, Section [2.2.1](#), "Records and Information Management and Retention" (<http://www.uthscsa.edu/hop2000/2.2.1.pdf>).