

CATEGORY:	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
SUB-CATEGORY:	APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY USE
GROUP:	
DISTRIBUTION:	ALL STAFF
TITLE:	EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE

PURPOSE

The objectives of this policy are to outline appropriate and inappropriate use of Western Health's email systems and services in order to minimize disruptions to services and activities, as well as comply with applicable policies and laws.

POLICY

Scope

This policy applies to all email systems and services owned by Western Health, all email account users/holders at Western Health (both temporary and permanent), and all Western Health email records.

Account Activation/Termination

Email access at Western Health is controlled through individual accounts and passwords. Each user of Western Health's email system must read and sign a copy of this Email Acceptable Use Policy prior to receiving an email access account and password. It is the responsibility of the employee to protect the confidentiality of their account and password information.

All employees of Western Health will receive an email account. Email accounts will be granted to third-party non-employees on a case-by-case basis. Possible non-employees that may be eligible for access include:

- Private Physicians
- Contractors

- Students
- Volunteers.

Applications for these temporary accounts must be submitted to Information Technology Help Desk (helpdesk@westernhealth.nl.ca). All terms, conditions, and restrictions governing email use must be in a signed agreement.

Email access will be terminated when the employee or third party terminates their association with Western Health, unless other arrangements are made. Western Health is under no obligation to store or forward the contents of an individual's email inbox/outbox after the term of their employment has ceased.

Appropriate Use and Management of Email

Individuals at Western Health are encouraged to use email to further the goals and objectives of Western Health. The types of activities that are encouraged include:

- Communicating with fellow employees or business partners of Western Health, within the context of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Communicating with clients or, where applicable, clients' substitute decision – makers.
- Acquiring or sharing information necessary or related to the performance of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Participating in educational or professional development activities.

Western Health often delivers official communications via email. As a result, employees of Western Health with email accounts must check their email in a consistent and timely manner so that they are aware of important announcements and updates, as well as for fulfilling the duties and responsibilities associated with their position.

Email users are responsible for mailbox management, including organization and cleaning. All email users are allotted a specific amount of storage space for their email and it is their responsibility to keep their email storage within that limit.

Email users are expected to remember that email sent from the organization's email accounts reflects on Western Health. All contents of Western Health's email system are official records of the organization and, as such, are subject to disclosure in the event of an investigation or request whereby the organization is legally authorized or compelled to release records respondent to the investigation or request. An example of this would be a request under [*The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Policy # 9 – 02 – 50.*](#)

Archival copies of all email messages sent from or received in Western Health's email system are retained for at least seven years.

Generally, email users must comply with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct when communicating by email.

Inappropriate Use

Western Health's email systems and services must not be used for purposes that could be reasonably expected to strain storage or bandwidth (e.g. emailing large attachments instead of pointing to a location on a shared drive). Email use at Western Health must comply with all applicable laws, all Western Health policies, and all Western Health contracts.

The following activities are deemed inappropriate uses of Western Health email systems and services, and are strictly prohibited:

- To engage in illegal activities.
- To harass, insult, or malign any person or group
- To receive or distribute materials that might be seen as obscene or degrading
- To misrepresent the truth by knowingly spreading misinformation or posing as someone else.
- To pursue any private commercial purpose.
- To promote non-work-related causes such as political parties or religious organizations.
- To solicit for donations or any other fundraising activities.
- To send chain letters.
- To send non-work-related messages to large audiences.
- To engage in any activity that is in clear conflict with the interests of Western Health or that is in violation with any of the organization's policies.
- Excessive personal use of Western Health email resources. Western Health allows limited personal use for communication with family and friends, independent learning, and public service so long as it does not interfere with staff productivity, pre-empt any business activity, or consume more than a trivial amount of resources.

Monitoring and Confidentiality

Western Health reserves the right to monitor the use of the organization's email systems for the following reasons, should they arise:

1. To investigate network performance issues. In this case, the nature and volume of all network traffic may be monitored to identify the cause of network slowdowns

- or failures. Any instances of inappropriate use discovered in this process will be noted and dealt with accordingly.
2. To confirm or dispel suspicions of excessive personal use or inappropriate use on the part of an individual or group. Monitoring, in this instance, will only be carried out with approval from Senior Management.
 3. In the event of an inquiry, investigation, or access to information request where the required legal authority exists.

Employees are to use caution when communicating confidential or sensitive information via email. All email messages sent outside of Western Health become the property of the receiver. Employees must demonstrate particular care when using the “Reply” command during email correspondence to ensure the resulting message is not delivered to unintended recipients.

Email is an acceptable means of communicating with clients or, where applicable, clients’ substitute decision-makers. provided that this practice is approved by the management in the clinical area. However, it is important that the client or substitute decision-maker understand the risks inherent in email communication and their responsibilities in protecting their own privacy. The following message can be used at the outset of any new email correspondence with a client or substitute decision-maker to help establish this understanding:

Before we begin to talk through email, I am required to make sure that you are OK with a few things:

- *Anything we write in emails becomes part of Western Health’s official records, the same as if I print it off and put it in a file.*
- *Western Health’s email is very secure because we have staff who take care of that, but we can’t ensure the security of the email system that you use. You have to be comfortable about that.*
- *We both need to be very careful about sending and replying to each other’s messages to make sure that we don’t accidentally send one to the wrong person.*

Are you OK with all of this?

Reporting Misuse

Any allegations of misuse must be promptly reported to the Regional Director, Information Management. If you receive an offensive email, do not forward, delete, or reply to the message. Instead, report it directly to the Regional Director, Information Management.

Failure to Comply

Violations of this policy will be treated like other allegations of wrongdoing at Western Health. Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established

procedures. Sanctions for inappropriate use on Western Health’s email systems and services may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

1. Temporary or permanent revocation of email access;
2. Disciplinary action according to applicable Western Health policies;
3. Termination of employment; and/or
4. Legal action according to applicable laws and contractual agreements.

KEYWORDS

Email
 e-mail
 email system
 confidentiality
 electronic mail
 records

TO BE COMPLETED BY QUALITY MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

Approved By: Chief Executive Officer	Maintained By: Regional Director – Information Management
Effective Date: 07/June/2012	<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed: <input type="checkbox"/> Revised: <i>(Date of most recent changes to the policy)</i>
Review Date: 07/June/2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces: <i>(Indicates name and number of policy being replaced)</i> OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New