

MS 643 LIMITED PERSONAL USE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICE EQUIPMENT

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1.0 POLICY SUMMARY

Employees are permitted to make limited, occasional use of government office equipment for non-government purposes when such use: (1) involves minimal additional expense to the government; (2) is performed on the employee's non-work time; (3) does not interfere with the Peace Corps' mission or operations; and (4) does not violate the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch or any other applicable provision of law.

This limited personal use policy does not override statutes, rules, regulations, or agency orders governing the use of specific types of government property or equipment (e. g., 31 U.S. C. § 1344 and MS 522, governing the use of government-owned or -leased motor vehicles).

2.0 AUTHORITY

Executive Order 13011, "Federal Information Technology," which authorizes the Chief Information Officers ("CIO") Council to "develop recommendations for overall Federal information technology management policy, procedures, and standards."

The CIO Council "Recommended Executive Branch Model Policy/Guidance on Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment."

3.0 AUTHORIZED PERSONAL USE IS A PRIVILEGE NOT A RIGHT

The use of government office equipment for non-government purposes is a privilege --not a right --that may be revoked or limited at any time at the discretion of an employee's supervisor or the Chief

Information Officer. The conduct of official government business always takes precedence over any limited personal use. Employees are expected to use common sense and good judgment when using government office equipment.

While each employee is responsible for his/her own actions, supervisors are responsible for monitoring employees' activities and determining which uses of government office equipment are inappropriate.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy:

4.1 Employees

“Employees” means Peace Corps employees, personnel of Peace Corps contractors, interns, special government employees such as Experts and Consultants, and other non- government employees such as Personal Service Contractors.

4.2 Government Office Equipment

“Government office equipment” includes, but is not limited to: personal computers and related peripheral equipment and software, library resources, telephones, facsimile machines, photocopiers, Internet connectivity and access to Internet services, e-mail, and office supplies (except stationery with Peace Corps letterhead or logo) to the extent such supplies are required to use government office equipment.

4.3 Minimal Additional Expense

“Minimal additional expense” means that an employee’s personal use of government office equipment is limited to situations where the government is already providing equipment or services and the employee’s use of the equipment or services will not result in any additional expense to the government or the use will result in only normal wear and tear or in the use of small amounts of such items as electricity, ink, toner, or paper.

Examples of personal uses that involve minimal additional expense include: making a few photocopies; using a computer printer to print a few pages of material; making occasional brief local telephone calls (consistent with agency policy and 41 CFR § 101- 35.201); infrequently sending personal e-mail messages; or making limited use of the Internet for personal reasons. Note that certain uses of telecommunications-based services may qualify as a minimal additional expense in the United States, but not overseas if the connection and access costs involve significant rather than minimal additional expense to the agency.

4.4 Employee Non-work Time

“Employee non-work time” means time when the employee is not otherwise expected to be addressing official business. Employees may, for example, use government office equipment before or after their workday, or during lunch periods or authorized breaks.

4.5 Person Use

“Personal use” means use of government office equipment for purposes other than accomplishing official or otherwise authorized activity.

5.0 INAPPROPRIATE PERSONAL USE

Inappropriate personal use of government office equipment includes:

- (a) Any personal use that could cause congestion, delay, or disruption of service to any government system or equipment. Examples of uses that would be inappropriate because of their potential to degrade the entire network include, but are not limited to: greeting cards, video, sound, large file attachments, “push” technology on the Internet, and continuous data streams.
- (b) Use of any government system as a staging ground or platform to gain unauthorized access to other systems.
- (c) The creation, copying, transmission, or retransmission of chain letters or other unauthorized mass mailings regardless of the subject matter.
- (d) Use for activities that are illegal, inappropriate, or offensive to fellow employees or the public. Such activities include, but are not limited to: hate speech, or material that ridicules others on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation.
- (e) The creation, downloading, viewing, storage, copying, or transmission of sexually explicit or sexually oriented materials.
- (f) The creation, downloading, viewing, storage, copying, or transmission of materials related to gambling, illegal weapons, terrorist activities, or any other illegal or prohibited activities.
- (g) Use for commercial purposes or in support of “for-profit” activities or in support of other outside employment or business activity (e. g., consulting for pay, sales or administration of business transactions, sale of goods or services).
- (h) Use to engage in any outside fund-raising activity, to endorse any product or service, to participate in any lobbying activity, or to engage in any prohibited partisan political activity.
- (i) Use for posting agency information to external newsgroups, bulletin boards, or other public fora without authority. This includes any use at odds with the agency’s mission or positions, or that could create the perception that the communication was made in one’s official capacity as a federal government employee.
- (j) The unauthorized acquisition, use, reproduction, transmission, or distribution of any controlled information, including computer software and data, that includes privacy information; proprietary data; export controlled software or data; or material that is copyrighted, trade marked, or to which other intellectual property rights attach (beyond fair use).

6.0 DISCLAIMERS

It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that they do not give the false impression that they are acting in an official capacity when they are using government office equipment for authorized personal use. When using Peace Corps office equipment, employees must use a disclaimer for any personal use that could reasonably be interpreted as an official Peace Corps statement or action. One acceptable disclaimer is: “The contents of this message are mine personally and do not reflect any position of the U.S. government or the Peace Corps.”

7.0 REMEMBER IT BELONGS TO THE GOVERNMENT

7.1 Any use of government communications resources should be made with the understanding that such use is generally not secure, is not private, and is not anonymous.

7.2 The Peace Corps employs monitoring tools to detect inappropriate personal use of government office equipment. An employee’s personal electronic communications may be disclosed to other employees who

have a need to know in the performance of their duties. Agency officials, such as system managers and supervisors, may access any electronic communications.

7.3 By using government office equipment, employees imply their consent to:

- (1) disclosing the contents of any files or information maintained or passed through government office equipment; and
- (2) having their use of government office equipment monitored and recorded, with or without cause, including but not limited to their access to the Internet and use of e-mail.

8.0 SANCTIONS FOR INAPPROPRIATE PERSONAL USE

An employee's unauthorized or inappropriate personal use of government office equipment could result in sanctions against the employee, including loss of use or limitations on use of equipment, disciplinary or adverse administrative actions, criminal penalties, and/or financial liability for the cost of any inappropriate personal use.