

12.4 COUNTY PHONES, COMPUTERS, & INTERNET USE

County employees and officials may not place personal long-distance telephone calls on county telephones. A call to notify family of county requirements to work unscheduled overtime is a county business call.

It is the policy of Austin County to ensure that the use of computers and electronic communications equipment is consistent with County's legitimate business interests. Therefore, Austin County reserves and intends to exercise the right to access and monitor the use such equipment as deemed necessary. Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to information input into or sent or received through any county computers or electronic communications equipment, including phones.

Employees shall adhere to the following guidelines when using county owned computers and/or electronic communications equipment:

- Computers, computer files, software, the e-mail system and internet furnished to employees are County property intended for business use only. Any personal use of the internet is expected to be on the employee's own equipment during off duty breaks and lunch hour and is not to interfere with the employee's job responsibilities.
- The County prohibits the use of its computers, the e-mail system or the internet in ways that are disruptive to others. Inappropriate or offensive messages, images, or documents containing racial or religious slurs or sexually suggestive or explicit language/photographs are prohibited. Employees should also note the e-mail messages and other contents of a computer's hard drive may be public record and may be subject to public inspection in accordance with the Public Information Act of the State of Texas.
- No software other than software approved by the County or individual department may be kept on a county computer. The limitation on software is to avoid software that may interfere with the operation of the county's computer system or may contain computer viruses that could cause operation problems or the loss of county data.
- Non-County employees should never be permitted to use County computers or equipment without approval of the Elected Official for specific authorization of County business only.