FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION		
MANUAL OF DIRECTIVES	COMMISSION DIRECTIVE	
	REVOKES: **November 25, 1997**	**NO.** 58 (Revised)
		EFFECTIVE DATE: **January 16, 2007**
Electronic Records, Software and Computer Usage		

Scope: The provisions contained within this directive apply to all Divisions and associated personnel of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), regardless of their position, location or relationship with the Commission. This includes, but is not limited to:

- all authorized users who access Federal Election Commission information systems, networks, and data processing devices,
- all vendors/contractors and their related personnel acting for the Federal Election Commission, and
- to non-Federal Election Commission organizations, including other Government agencies, who are granted access to Federal Election Commission information resources.

This directive applies equally to mainframe, minicomputer, and microcomputer environments of the Federal Election Commission.

Only those persons who have written permission from the Federal Election Commission's Chief Information Officer are exempt from these provisions.

Direct questions concerning this directive should be directed to the Federal Election Commission's Information System Security Officer, Information Technology Division (ITD).

Definitions: The term "FEC Information System" refers to and includes any and all forms of equipment, tools and intellectual property related to computer use. This includes computer systems, personal computers, personal digital assistants, computer networks, and all forms of software, firmware, operating software and application software that the FEC owns or that is under the FEC's possession, custody or control.

The term "electronic records" refers to and includes digital images, computer-generated spreadsheets, electronic versions of paper documents, the products of desktop publishing software, e-mail and any future types of information generated on Commission automated data processing equipment and stored in Commission databases.

The term "software" includes commercial software purchased by the agency and computer programs developed by agency staff or contract personnel.

The term "sensitive information" refers to any data/information (whether in an electric or non-electric format) where loss, misuse, or unauthorized access to or modification of could seriously hamper the Commission's ability to carry out its mandated functions. Information previously categorized as confidential is considered a subset of sensitive. Personal and Privacy Act information are classified as sensitive information.

General Policy: The Commission's large-scale investment in computer technology has greatly enhanced our capabilities in the agency's disclosure program, our audit and enforcement programs, and our day-to-day administrative activities. Our Information Technology Architecture (ITA) is largely decentralized and considerable autonomy is therefore afforded individual staff members (hereafter, "end users"). This, in turn, confers considerable responsibility on end users to ensure that information systems are used appropriately and protected from loss, misuse, or unauthorized access. This includes a responsibility to minimize the FEC vulnerability to inadvertent or malicious system failures, to respect software licensing and copyright laws, and to protect information stored on agency computers.

Protecting Paper and Electronic Records: Information in electronic form is no less the public's property than is information recorded on paper. The speed and ease with which one may communicate over the computer network does not diminish the official nature of the content of such communications. FEC electronic and paper records are protected under the Privacy Act, FECA and applicable FEC Information Technology (IT) policies and standards. Paper and electronic records are accessible through the Freedom of Information (FOIA) and Sunshine Act. Consequently, these records must be safeguarded and archived with the same attentiveness, as their level of sensitivity requires. FOIA access to electronic records includes the end user's assigned personal computer as well as other Commission's information resources.

The FEC has developed and implemented a comprehensive entity-wide information system security program designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its systems, networks, and data. However, even after its considerable investment, the FEC realizes that the primary component of any security program is you the end user. As the principal component of the FEC system security program, end users take on the burden of protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information when they bypass FEC security guidelines by saving your work to media other than the FEC network. As in the case of paper records, each individual user is also responsible for the erasure and/or destruction of any sensitive information the user chooses to store outside of the FEC network.

If there is any doubt as to what is considered sensitive versus non-sensitive, staff should consult their FEC Management and contracting personnel should contact their contracting officer representative. If there is any doubt as to proper protection procedures for sensitive information, staff should consult their FEC Management and contracting personnel should contact their contracting officer representative and if necessary, the FEC Information Systems Security Officer.

Control of Computer Software: Commission computers employ a variety of standardized commercial software and custom computer programs. Strict control over computer software is necessary to maintain the integrity and coherence of the agency's information technology architecture (ITA), to comply with intellectual property copyright laws and licensing agreements, and to shield FEC computers and databases from destructive computer "viruses."

ITD has implemented a process to anticipate the software needs of Commission staff across-the-board. Nonetheless, individual employees or units may have specialized needs that they believe can be satisfied with other commercially available software packages. All software, however, must be purchased, installed, and configured by ITD staff. The Training and Computer Support Branch will assist offices with unique application requirements.

Downloading "freeware" and "shareware" from the Internet is prohibited. In addition end users are also prohibited from copying agency purchased commercial software for installation on non-FEC computers.

FEC computer systems and/or user accounts are subject to inspection and monitoring for non-compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures. There is no expectation of privacy with a government computer system and/or account.

All agency computers are protected by anti-viral software, which is updated as new strains are detected and countermeasures devised. Computer viruses can wreak havoc on individual computers and the entire network. End users may not disable the anti-viral software or reconfigure operating system features. End users should alert the ITD HelpDesk immediately if they believe they have detected a viral infection on their computer despite these safeguards.

Restrictions on Use of Commission Computer Systems: End users have considerable control over the manner in which they employ their computer system and the manner in which they communicate over the internal agency network and the Internet. The following guidelines must govern that use:

A. Do not use the system to solicit co-workers for unauthorized charities, to advertise personal property for sale, or for other personal benefit. Staff may, however, use the system to broadcast news of a personal nature of interest to their co-workers, such as birth announcements.

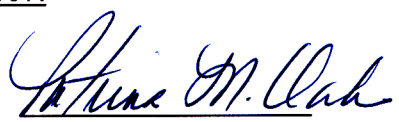
B. Staff must refrain from using offensive, insensitive or intemperate language about people and issues in internal or Internet e-mail. Employees should remember that personal opinions lose any privacy protection once they are imprinted on government records be they paper or electronic. Both the end user and the agency can be held liable by an offended party.

C. De minimis personal use of the system is acceptable just as it is with the telephone. Any such use must be appropriate, must not incur any additional costs to the government and must not impede the fulfillment of your FEC work.

D. In the case of the personal use of Internet e-mail, you should make it clear, when appropriate, that your e-mail is not an official communication from the agency.

E. The Internet contains material, such as sexually explicit material, that is not appropriate for the workplace. The FEC expects employees to conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and to refrain from using government resources for activities that are offensive to co-workers or the public.

This Directive was adopted on January 16, 2007.



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