

IV. Rules of Conduct

A. Ethics Policy

CRCOG is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct as an integral part of its mission. Employees are expected to devote their best efforts to the interests of CRCOG and its member communities. To achieve this goal, CRCOG relies on each employee's ethical behavior, honesty, integrity, and good judgment.

Each employee shall adhere to generally accepted ethical and professional standards in conducting the business and affairs of CRCOG. Each employee shall also demonstrate respect for the rights of others and accept accountability for his or her actions.

Each employee must operate in compliance with all laws, regulations and policies related to their positions and areas of responsibility.

B. Conflicts of Interest

Business dealings that create a conflict between the interests of CRCOG and an employee are unacceptable. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest should be avoided.

CRCOG's mission includes promoting citizen participation in local government and community activities. We also encourage our employees to be active in community organizations and events. However, the nature of the organization and its work can create potential conflicts for CRCOG employees who wish to participate in local boards or commissions. Employees should be aware of and avoid conflicts of interest between their official duties and any civic activities outside of work, especially if these activities occur in CRCOG member communities. Outside responsibilities that may create a conflict should first be discussed with the employee's supervisor.

In addition, CRCOG employees whose salaries are paid with federal funds should be aware of and act in accordance with the Hatch Act, which restricts political activity by federal employees. These employees may not:

- be candidates for public office in a partisan election
- use official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination

- directly or indirectly coerce contributions from subordinates in support of a political party or candidate

Under the Hatch Act, these employees may:

- run for public office in nonpartisan elections
- campaign for and hold office in political clubs and organizations
- actively campaign for candidates for public office in partisan and nonpartisan elections
- contribute money to political organizations and attend political fundraising functions

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Hatch Act. If an employee is found to have willfully violated these provisions he or she may be subject to dismissal. Additional information on the Hatch Act is available at

<http://www.osc.gov/>

C. Outside Employment

Any individual desiring to engage in outside employment must receive prior approval of his or her supervisor. In addition, the following conditions must be adhered to:

- There shall be no conflict of interest as determined by the Executive Director.
- Outside or independent employment with CRCOG member municipalities is discouraged so as to avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict.
- Outside employment activities may not be engaged in during normal CRCOG working periods or interfere in any way with regular CRCOG duties and responsibilities.
- The employment may not involve use of CRCOG telephones, computers, supplies or any other resources, facilities, or equipment.
- CRCOG shall in no respect be liable, nor grant sick or disability leave, should injury occur to an employee while he/she is engaged in outside employment.
- Any employee engaging in employment outside his/her regular working hours is expected to give first priority to his/her regular CRCOG duties.

D. Computer Use

CRCOG maintains intranet and internet access for its employees for the purpose of improving productivity, professional development, and the level of service to the people of our community.

CRCOG's computer system is not a public system. CRCOG has the right to place reasonable restrictions on the material you access or post through the system.

Unacceptable uses

- You may not use the system for commercial purposes.
- You may not gain unauthorized access to the CRCOG system, or to any other computer system through the CRCOG system, or go beyond your authorized access.
- You will not use the CRCOG system to engage in any illegal act.
- You are responsible for your individual account and must take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from being able to use your account. Under no conditions should you provide your password to another person. You will immediately notify the system administrator if you have identified a possible security problem.
- Restrictions against inappropriate language apply to public messages, private messages, and material posted on Web pages. You will not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory or threatening language. You will not post information that could cause damage or a danger of disruption. You will not engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks. You will not harass another person. If you are told by a person to stop sending them messages, you must stop. You will not knowingly or recklessly post false or defamatory information about a person or organization.
- You will not post chain letters or engage in "spamming". Spamming is sending an annoying or unnecessary message to a large number of people. You will check your e-mail frequently and delete unwanted messages promptly.

- Video and audio live streaming use significant amounts of bandwidth. You will not use video or audio streaming programs unless it is necessary for the performance of your official duties.
- You will respect the rights of copyright owners. Copyright infringement occurs when you inappropriately reproduce a work that is protected by a copyright. If a work contains language that specifies appropriate use of that work, you should follow the expressed requirements. If you are unsure whether or not you can use a work, you should request permission from the copyright owner.

Unsafe Material

All computers are vulnerable to viruses, spy ware, ad ware, and other malicious code. Ensure that your computer has updated virus and spy ware scanning loaded and operating. Do not download anything from any site you are not convinced is safe. Any attachment to an e-mail received from an unknown source should be scanned before being downloaded. Employees should check with IT staff before adding any non-standard software programs to their computers.

Privacy

CRCOG's system is funded with public dollars, solely for public purposes. As such, almost all communications are public records. Therefore, CRCOG reserves the right to monitor your use of the computer and voicemail system and any communications over it. There is no right to privacy.

File Saving and Retention

All files should be saved on the appropriate folder on the CRCOG server. Files stored on personal computer hard drives are not backed up and may be lost in case of a computer malfunction.

Personal Use

Like local phone service, no additional costs are incurred by CRCOG for use of the internet. Therefore, limited personal use of the internet is not prohibited, in accordance with the other terms and conditions of this policy, and to the same extent that personal, local telephone calls are appropriate.

Personal use is allowed provided that it does not interfere in any way with the intended uses of CRCOG's system, and that it is performed during personal time.

All personal use must also be in accordance with the restrictions and requirements set forth in this policy.

Installing Programs

All programs installed on CRCOG computers must be for CRCOG business only. CRCOG employees may not install personal programs, games or other programs on the CRCOG computer. If CRCOG employee needs a program not already installed, the employee should receive approval from Information Technology personnel. Unauthorized programs will be uninstalled.

Laptops

CRCOG-provided laptops should be used primarily for conducting CRCOG business and should not be a substitute for an employee's home computer.

Due to their size and portability, laptop computers are especially vulnerable to theft. Below are some tips on how to protect your laptop from being stolen.

- Do not leave a laptop in an unlocked vehicle, even if the vehicle is in your driveway or garage, and never leave it in plain sight. If you must leave your laptop in a vehicle, the best place is in a locked trunk. If you do not have a trunk, cover it up and lock the doors.
- Be aware of the damage extreme temperature can cause to computers.
- Carry your laptop in a nondescript carrying case or bag when traveling.
- Do not leave a meeting or conference room without your laptop. Take it with you.
- Never check a laptop as luggage at the airport and be alert when computers are on the conveyor belts of metal detectors at the airport.
- Lock-up the laptop off-hours.

- Do not let unaccompanied strangers wander around in your workplace. Offer assistance and deliver the person to their destination.

If a theft does occur, you must report it to a police department promptly and notify CRCOG as soon as possible.

Non-CRCOG computers may represent a threat to the network and may not be plugged into the CRCOG network without prior approval from the IT manager.

E. Document and E-Mail Retention

As a public agency, CRCOG is subject to Freedom of Information Act requests, as well as document retention requirements. Details of retention schedules for different types of documents may be found at:

<http://www.cslib.org/stateadmin.pdf>

Employees should be aware that e-mail may be considered public documents. According to state law, e-mail messages fall within three broad categories:

- Transitory messages, including copies posted to several persons and casual and routine communications similar to telephone conversations. Public officials and employees receiving such communications may delete them immediately without obtaining the approval of the Office of the Public Records Administration and State Archives.
- Public records with a less than Permanent retention period. Follow retention period for equivalent hard copy records as specified in an approved retention schedule. The record must be in hard copy or electronic format, which can be retrieved and interpreted for the legal retention period.
- Public records with a Permanent or Permanent/Archival retention period. Retention may be in the form of a hard-copy printout or microfilm.

F. Dress Code and Appearance

It is the policy of CRCOG that all staff should present a professional image through attire and appearance. While the organization has no desire to dictate specific styles of clothing worn by employees, it is expected that

everyone will dress appropriately while at work and strive to project a positive, professional image.

Casual clothes are generally inappropriate for the office and should not be worn during business hours.

The Executive Director may, at his or her discretion, designate a specific day or day of the week as a casual dress day, typically as part of a “denim for dollars” charity fundraising event. Appropriate business casual attire includes, but is not limited to: neat shirts, casual shoes, sweaters, slacks, good quality jeans, etc. Examples of casual clothing inappropriate for business settings includes: worn jeans or other worn or torn clothing, shorts, halter tops, tank tops, sweatshirts, sweatpants, stretch pants, sneakers, flip flop sandals, and t-shirts printed with slogans.

In addition to proper dress, employees are expected to present a clean, neat and business-like appearance.

Supervisors are responsible for interpreting and enforcing the dress and grooming code. If an employee dresses inappropriately, he or she will be counseled by a supervisor. Repeated disregard for the dress policy may result in disciplinary action.

G. Tardiness

An employee’s workday begins at the starting time of the established schedule. Frequent tardiness is not permissible and may serve as grounds for disciplinary action. It is expected that supervisors will ensure that time records are correct and accurately reflect hours actually worked and approved time off.

H. Substance Abuse

Use, possession, sale or purchase of illegal drugs on Council premises, by Council employees while performing Council duties at any other location, or in automobiles rented for Council business purposes, is strictly prohibited.

Employees found in violation of the use, possession or purchase prohibitions will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

Employees whose work performance or behavior is adversely affected by the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or deliberate misuse of prescribed drugs will be sent home and will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

I. Reporting Of Absences

Employees are requested to report expected absences as early as is possible, prior to the start of their workday. Where the nature of an absence indicates an extended period of time off, the supervisor may establish reporting requirements.

F. Social Media Policy

CRCOG employees will follow the guidelines outlined in the Social Media Policy (adopted by the board on December 6, 2010) when using social media on behalf of, or representing, CRCOG.