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E-mail that is of a personal or transitory nature need not be archived. However, e-mail that is an official record of government is to be retained. Remember that e-mail is accessible under the terms of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Departments should ensure that their e-mail retention policies follow The Archives Act as it refers to official government records.

E-mail is an official record if:

- It was created or received as part of the normal business practices of the department and it relates to the department's mandate,

- If documents, interprets or otherwise supports departmental policy, decisions, transactions and events or it contains informational value of significance to the department.

Employees must not attempt to read another person's e-mail unless otherwise authorized. The e-mail system is the property of the Saskatchewan Government. Employees should have no reasonable expectation of privacy in e-mail transmitted, received and stored on and/or through the government's system. An e-mail is the property of the Government of Saskatchewan and is not a private employee communication (whether created or received).

It is unacceptable to send large files such as singing Christmas cards or animated Valentine's greetings as attachments to e-mail - such attachments can seriously affect the performance of a department's network. Remember that e-mail is the leading source of computer viruses; be especially suspicious of attachments. Unencrypted e-mail is not secure. Employees have a responsibility to put only non-sensitive information in an e-mail. The recipient is responsible for handling the message with respect and securing the sender's permission before forwarding it.

Employees must have their supervisors' permission before using the Government's information technology resources for large scale distribution of e-mail. The e-mail's subject line should always be filled out. Employees are encouraged to create separate signature files for personal and official e-mail that is sent from government accounts. The text of the official signature file must list job title, department and telephone or fax number. Personal signature file text must contain a disclaimer indicating that the e-mail does not represent the views of the Government of Saskatchewan. Signature file size should be kept to a minimum.

Many employees access personal or work e-mail through web-based accounts hosted on sites such as HotMail or Netscape. Currently, this incidental use of the Government's information technology infrastructure is permitted. However, web-based e-mail must be used cautiously.

If irresponsible use of web-based e-mail damages departmental computers and networks, permission to access web-based e-mail from work may have to be reviewed.
Employees who access web-based e-mail with Government of Saskatchewan computers, Mobile Computing Devices (ie. Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's)), cell phones and networks are to follow the guidelines below.

- Web-based e-mail account names MUST be different from department network account names

- We-based e-mail account passwords MUST not be the same as department passwords

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- Passwords MUST not be words found in the dictionary

- Passwords MUST contain alpha and numeric characters and be at least 8 characters long.

- Browsers should be configured to prompt the user before external code is run

- To avoid the inconvenience of logging in and out of web-based e-mail, some websites will ask if you wish to store your password in a browser cache or cookie. DON'T DO THIS. If you do, anyone who has access to your computer can access your account.

- DON'T configure web-based e-mail to automatically forward to work e-mail accounts (or vice versa).

- DON'T forward restricted or confidential work e-mail to your web-based e-mail account.

- Most Web-based e-mail does not include encryption. Therefore, business information, information of a confidential or sensitive nature, such as credit card numbers, passwords and other personal information, should not be sent.

- NEVER open suspicious or unexpected e-mail attachments. They may contain a script or executable program that can delete local files, send files/documents or passwords to another host and severely damage the network.

- DON'T send large attachments.

- Always scan attachments with up-to-date virus software prior to opening.