

MISUSE OF GOVERNMENT IT AND COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

You have probably all read recent news articles about the use of government provided computers and Internet by a handful of federal employees to access pornography. It thus seems an appropriate time to remind everyone about their obligations as public servants -- and as colleagues, since the misconduct of a few reflects badly on everyone.

PLEASE REMEMBER you are provided access to Internet services and computer equipment for authorized purposes only. The Department has authorized certain limited use of Government resources, including computers and internet access, for personal use. See DOE Order 203.1: <https://www.directives.doe.gov/directives/current-directives/203.1-BOrder/view> To use such equipment and services for unauthorized purposes constitutes a breach of Departmental policy, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 C.F.R. 2635), and in some instances, statutes that may result in disciplinary action ranging from official reprimand to termination of employment.

The recent news reports indicate that many federal agencies are finding employee use of official Internet access and equipment to visit sites containing pornography. The Department of Interior reports one manager had 3400 sexually explicit images on a Government computer. The SEC recently reported a number of senior employees spent hours on the agency's computers looking at inappropriate sites while the country was in the midst of a financial crisis.

To be clear, this Department does not and will not tolerate ANY use of government provided Internet access and equipment for the purpose of viewing pornography.

Moreover, even using personal equipment and internet access to view pornography in an office may be viewed as creating an unlawful, hostile work environment and, likewise, will not be tolerated.

Employees do not have a right, nor should they have an expectation, of privacy while using Government resources at any time. Employee use of Government computers is preceded by a security banner advising that use of the equipment constitutes consent to monitoring, reviewing and disclosure of their activities when deemed appropriate by the Department or as mandated by law.

As public servants, we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of behavior and stewardship. Managers and supervisors are expected to ensure that employees know the risks associated with inappropriate use of Government resources and are required to take appropriate administrative action if misuse occurs.

For additional information, headquarters employees should contact the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official on (202) 586-1522, or through e-mail to: standardsconduct@hq.doe.gov. Field employees should contact their Office of Chief Counsel.

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