



## Kent VFD Computer Use and Electronic Communications Policy January 2013

### **1. Purpose**

Acknowledging the importance of electronic communications within Kent Volunteer Fire Department (Kent VFD), this policy defines the proper use, access and disclosure of material sent or received and explains how Kent VFD monitors use of this resource. Electronic communication systems ('systems') include, for example, electronic mail (e-mail), IAMRESPONDING, Red Alert, internet access, intranet, extranets, voice mail, and facsimiles. Not limited to the computers, telephone equipment and other hardware and software that support the delivery of these communications.

This policy automatically applies to all communication systems provided by Kent VFD, currently or in the future. Members and all authorized agents or representatives are bound by this policy, whether the Systems are accessed at work or remotely.

Kent VFD respects the privacy and confidentiality of personal information contained in member communications. However, you have a responsibility to ensure that communications are of a type necessary for the conduct of Kent VFD's business. It is important that you understand that the systems and all information communicated via these Systems are the property of Kent VFD (even if you store such information on a computer or other device you personally own).

### **2. Rights/Restrictions**

Our electronic communication systems are intended for official use, for the benefit of Kent VFD and our members and include non exclusive property rights. All systems must be used in a responsible, ethical and lawful manner. Electronic communication must be conducted with the same degree of professionalism as written or other traditional communication. Care must be taken to avoid misstatements or remarks that could lead to legal exposure for the author or Kent VFD. Users must properly identify themselves and must not misrepresent their identity when communicating electronically.

Kent VFD will permit occasional and restricted personal use of a system on your own time. Such use must be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with your performance of duty or the duty work performed by others.

To ensure that Kent VFD meets its official business and legal obligations, we may block access to selected non-business Internet sites, electronically monitor usage of our systems on a temporary or ongoing basis, and respond to internal or external complaints about inappropriate usage. If, based on our general systems monitoring Kent VFD reasonably believes there is a violation of this policy, more specific monitoring, which may include monitoring of an individual's communications, may be undertaken. Purposes for monitoring include but are not limited to identification of: excessive non-official business use, visits to inappropriate Internet sites (for example, sexual, racist or gambling sites), solicitation, or transmission of offensive or illegal material. If improper or excessive personal use is identified, the President of the department and or the P&E committee will be informed and appropriate action will be taken.

#### A few additional points about appropriate usage:

- Given the range of material available through the Internet, it is not possible for Kent VFD to produce an exhaustive list of permitted sites or material. You should err on the side of caution in accessing Internet material.
- Communications that involve continuous feeds such as stock price updates or the transmission of music through the Internet are network intensive and should not be established. Exceptions would be communications that are official business related such as news feeds.

- You should be aware of copyrights associated with electronic material. Copyrighted material may not be downloaded to or distributed through Kent VFD Systems without the permission of the copyright owner.
- Exceptional care must be taken when addressing messages to ensure that sensitive Kent VFD material is not inadvertently misdirected outside of the department or to others that do not have a need to know the information
- As a courtesy to others, large file transfers (10 MB or over) should be transmitted during off hours
- You should not review, retrieve, read or listen to any messages or files that are not directed to you
- Software must not be downloaded from the Internet for installation on any Kent VFD hardware. If you have questions about this, contact a member of the technology committee.

If you observe or receive inappropriate communications from any source, (particularly those that are defamatory, obscene or unlawful), inform a member of the technology committee, department president, or chief for advice on appropriate action.

### **3. Security and Monitoring**

The following are pertinent elements of Kent VFD's information security strategy and guidelines for electronic communications.

- Using a Kent VFD computer on our Local Area Network is the preferred method of accessing our electronic communication systems. Any other form of access must be approved by the technology committee.
- Password or security codes are not to be shared. These codes are used to log onto Kent VFD's network and systems. Use of a password or security code in an attempt to disguise an electronic identity is prohibited under Kent VFD policy and may be a violation of civil and criminal laws.
- Remote members must use an additional layer of authentication for accessing our network when outside the facility (See technology committee)
- Firewalls are implemented to protect Kent VFD systems from intrusions
- All e-mail attachments are scanned for viruses before transmission
- Kent VFD has the right to monitor, review, audit, intercept and, when appropriate, disclose information sent through our systems in accordance with this policy. Examples of why we might monitor a system include:
  - To transact business during a member's absence
  - To administer system security procedures and routines
  - To conduct statistical performance/usage analysis or to facilitate audits
  - To detect or investigate crime, cooperate with law-enforcement agencies, defend legal rights or obtain legal advice
  - To ascertain compliance with this or other relevant Kent VFD policies

Using a password or other security measure does not mean a communication will not be monitored by Kent VFD. The use of passwords or security codes is intended solely for Kent VFD's protection.

### **4. Personal Responsibility**

If you have a Facebook or similar electronic media account and your personal profile indicates you are a member of Kent VFD and you decide to send messages to harass or degrade others, use vulgar, profane, inappropriate and/or sexual messages you must DELETE any and ALL references to your relationship with the Kent VFD.

Taking pictures of emergency responses and scenes are at the discretion and approval of the chief. Pictures are not to be posted without the approval of the department chief. All pictures approved must not disclose any personal identifiers e.g., license plate number, names, address, age etc., and must comply with all local, state and federal

privacy regulations e.g., HIPAA. Pictures should only be used for official Kent VFD e.g., educational and are the sole property of Kent VFD.

### **5. Compliance**

All members are responsible for complying with this policy, as well as applicable laws of the jurisdiction in which the electronic communication occurs.

Kent VFD disavows responsibility for (i) the content of any messages sent and/or received by any Kent VFD member, agent or representative, which is prohibited by this policy, (ii) messages which in the opinion of Kent VFD contain offensive or harassing material or (iii) the use of any Kent VFD system, including the Internet, in a manner contrary to this policy.

### **6. Acceptance/Violation of Policy**

Kent VFD does not condone, practice or accept the above described behaviors.

By making use of our electronic communication resources you are deemed to have accepted this policy and are required to comply with it. Any member who violates this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including suspension and or termination of their membership & affiliation as determined by the P&E process and decision.

When considering corrective action, investigative results and personal data about members may be sent to Kent VFD leadership for review. All personal membership data will be treated in accordance with the requirements of local law and privacy policy.

