

Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Network Instant Messaging Use Policy

Policy

Employees must not install any Instant Messaging (IM) software without specific authorization from the TSSWCB IT department, the fiscal officer or the executive director.

Employees authorized to use IM technologies must not download any illegal and/or unauthorized copyrighted content. The TSSWCB IT department, the fiscal officer or the executive director must approve the use of IM technology to download copyrighted material. The TSSWCB must follow appropriate state and federal laws and guidelines when copying, storing, or transferring copyrighted material.

This policy applies to IM used within the TSSWCB and IM used conjointly with the Internet and does not supersede any state or federal laws, or any other agency policies regarding confidentiality, information dissemination, or standards of conduct. Generally, IM should be used only for legitimate state business; however, brief and occasional IM of a personal nature may be sent and received if the following conditions are met.

Personal Responsibility

Personal use of IM is a privilege, not a right. As such, the privilege may be revoked at any time and for any reason. Abuse of the privilege may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

Privacy

Authorized state network users should keep in mind that all IM can be recorded and stored along with the source and destination. Users have no right to privacy with regard to IM. Management has the ability and right to view employees' IM. Recorded instant messages are the property of the TSSWCB. Thus, they are subject to the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act and the laws applicable to state records retention.

Personal Use

Personal use of IM is subject to the approval of an employee's direct supervisor. If approved by a direct supervisor, incidental amounts of employee time—time periods comparable to reasonable coffee breaks during the day—can be used to attend to personal matters via IM or other telecommunications, similar to personal telephone calls.

Restrictions

Personal IM should not impede the conduct of state business.

If authorized for usage on state systems, IM may be used for any routine official business communication that is not normally filed for record keeping, such as a communication that is temporarily needed only for an employee to complete an action.

Authorized users should not use IM to conduct any state business that would require the content to be saved as a state record.

IM may not be used to document a statutory obligation or agency decision, and IM should not be used when the resulting record would normally be retained for record keeping purposes.

Information

Questions related to the TSSWCB Instant Messaging Policy should be addressed to:

TSSWCB IT Department

E-mail: support@tsswcb.texas.gov

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