

Protect your network from e-mail abuses

E-mail systems can be abused in ways that compromise or strain electronic communications resources. Every organization's e-mail policy should have provisions that forbid or limit such misuse.

Usages that can be a burden on system resources are:

- Perpetuating chain e-mail letters.
- Creating and sending spam.
- Sending or encouraging "letter bombs" that are used to harass others.
- Practicing an activity designed to deny the availability of electronic communications resources.

If your e-mail policy doesn't include prohibitions against these behaviors, insert the policy statement that TechRepublic has developed for you. Feel free to modify it to fit in with your organization's policy.

To produce this insert, TechRepublic has permission to use portions of policies from the following:

- [The University of California](#)
- [The SANS Institute](#)
- [The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers \(IEEE\)](#)

TechRepublic recommends that you visit these sites to see the original policies used in producing the following e-mail use insert.

Unacceptable uses of e-mail are discussed in the Allowable Use section No. 7, "Interference," in the PDF version of the University of California's Electronic Communications Policy included in this download. Also included is IEEE's "E-mail Acceptable Use Policy." Both policies illustrate how an "unacceptable e-mail use" section should be included within an overall e-mail policy.

Unacceptable e-mail use: Interference

<Company name> forbids the use of company electronic communications resources for any purpose that could strain or compromise these resources. The company also forbids electronic communications that interfere with the use of these resources by other employees.

Toward this end, company resources may not be used to:

- **Perpetuate chain e-mail letters or their equivalents.** This includes letters that require the recipient to forward an e-mail to a specified number of addresses in order to achieve some monetary, philosophical, political, superstitious, or other goal. E-mails that are part of a multilevel marketing or pyramid-selling scheme, sometimes known as "Ponzi schemes," are illegal in many places and are specifically forbidden under this policy.
- **Create and/or send "spam."** Spam is defined as any unsolicited electronic communication that is sent to any number of recipients who did not specifically request or express an interest in the material advertised in the communication. It will be considered a greater offense if the company's electronic communications resources are exploited to amplify the range of distribution of these communications.
- **Send or encourage "letter bombs."** Letter bombs are extremely large or numerous e-mail messages that are intended to annoy, interfere, or deny e-mail use by one or more recipients.
- **Practice an activity designed to deny the availability of electronic communications resources.** Also called "denial of service attacks," these activities deny or limit services through mail bombing, malicious executables such as viruses, threatening a virus, or opening a large number of mail connections to a mail host or SMTP relay without authorization or permission.