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Subject: To All Employees: Appropriate Use of Electronic Mail

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY EMPLOYEES

FROM: ARCHER L. DURHAM
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT: APPROPRIATE USE OF THE ELECTRONIC MAIL SYSTEM AND OF
EMPLOYEE DUTY TIME

The recent expansion of electronic mail in the Department of Energy has proved to be a useful addition to the growing field of communications and information management tools available to us. These tools can make our work time more productive and make us more effective in dealing with our colleagues and our customers.

With such opportunity comes responsibility. On February 14, 1996, I distributed to you a memorandum on the appropriate use of the Internet after receiving reports of possible misuse by Department of Energy Federal and contractor employees. I have now become aware that there have been a number of instances of use of the electronic mail system for other than authorized purposes. The instances of use have included broad distribution of messages related to activities that are social in nature and arenot sponsored by the Department, downloading and distribution of sports-related materials from the Internet, and communications related to internal business of labor organizations (e.g., solicitations for membership and other union organizing activities).

As Federal employees, we are required to safeguard the tools that we use, including the personal computers we employ to generate the electronic messages we send. The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch provide that an employee "shall not use [Government] property or allow its use for other than authorized purposes." Government property includes "telephone and other telecommunications equipment and services, the Government mails, automated data processing capabilities, [and] printing and reproduction facilities..." "Authorized purposes are those purposes for which Government property is made available to members of the public or those purposes authorized in accordance with law or regulation." Section 2635.704, title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

Employees' use of duty time is also covered by the Standards of Ethical Conduct in the section which provides that "[u]nless authorized in accordance with law or regulations to use such time for other purposes, an employee shall use official time in an honest effort to perform official duties..." Section 2635.705, title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

Misuse of Government resources, whether property or duty time, is not acceptable and constitutes a serious breach of the Government's Standards of Ethical Conduct.

We, as Federal employees, are expected to hold ourselves to the highest standards of behavior and stewardship. We should remind ourselves and those whom we supervise of the risks associated with inappropriate use of Federal resources, including electronic mail or duty time. Appropriate disciplinary action is the expected consequence of misuse of Government resources. While the reported incidences of misuse of resources have been relatively few, the potential for abuse and the associated consequences should be fully considered by all.