Email management standards

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

Hennepin County's email standards help staff responsibly manage data

Hennepin County implemented a new email management and storage policy on January 1, 2017. This policy allows staff to save emails in the county's system for up to 3 years. It also requires official records to be stored in a system of record, not the email system. This policy helps to set technology standards and is a business best practice that balances transparency and data management.

With more than 8,000 employees, Hennepin County currently has 210 million emails on our servers. Staff receive 6 million new emails per month. Without change, email growth and cost is exponential. Current costs are $3 million per year to store emails.

New standards are based on public and private industry standards

Prior to January 1, 2017, Hennepin County had no formal email management policy or standards in place. With this new policy, Hennepin County is further formalizing the management of email. This ensures that email is not used as a system of record or long-term storage tool. The new policy and standards are based on:

- IT Advisory Board recommendations—a group of Twin Cities based chief information officers who help guide Hennepin County to keep current with industry standards.

- Successful similar policies created by our peer public agencies both regionally and across the nation.

Contacts

Hennepin County Intergovernmental Relations

Mary Beth Davidson
Director
Office: 612-348-5120
Cell: 651-450-1335
mary.davidson@hennepin.us

Kareem Murphy
Deputy Director
Office: 612-596-9711
Cell: 612-801-0954
kareem.murphy@hennepin.us

Hennepin County IT

Jerry Driessen
Chief Information Officer
Office: 612-596-7409
Jerome.driessen@hennepin.us

Policy and standards improve our data management for many reasons

Hennepin County's transparency and ability to provide pertinent information will improve after removing old emails that currently bog down the system. Our staff will be able to better respond to information requests of all types.

We are implementing this email policy and standards for two key reasons:

- Efficient and reliable systems – Large attachments and too many emails cause performance and reliability problems for the email system.

- Email is not a safe or secure way to retain important county data. Employees must begin to use other methods, in line with each department's data policy.

The new standards of retaining emails for 3 years or less will reduce taxpayer burden related to storage costs.

Standards created after extensive research

Hennepin County's Information Technology department reviewed our employee use of email from business, storage capacity and document retention perspectives. Hennepin County also identified best practices from other public agencies. This ensures email remains a cost-effective and reliable service.

Email retention schedule allows staff to save email up to 3 years

Email location	Moved to archive folder	Auto-delete if not official record or business need	Auto-delete if moved to folder for business need
Inbox	90 days after receiving	180 days after receiving	3 years after receiving
Sent	90 days after sending	180 days after sending	3 years after sending
Deleted/Junk	N/A	14 days after receiving	N/A

Standards are compliant with state law

Hennepin County remains compliant with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Employees must keep official records in other systems of record, such as personnel documents, contracts, financial information, security reports, injury reports, correspondence from clients and others.

Email accounts under litigation holds or preservation holds are exempt from the automatic deletion schedule.

The Hennepin County Sheriff has implemented an email management policy that requires official records be removed from the email system, and emails get automatically deleted after 30 days regardless of their location.