


Shoreline Policy and Procedure
Use of Text Messaging for City Business

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1.0 PURPOSE

The City of Shoreline recognizes text messaging is an effective communication tool for City employees to send and receive transitory messages to facilitate City business in a convenient and timely manner. The purpose of this policy is to establish rules on the appropriate use and retention of text messages.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 City business - relates to the conduct or the performance of the City of Shoreline.
- 2.2 Transitory records - records created or received by the City which are typically of short-term, temporary informational use.
- 2.3 Text Messaging - sending or receiving SMS, MMS, or iMessage messages.
- 2.4 SMS - Short Message Service is a service that allows for short text messages to be sent from one cell phone to another cell phone or from the Web to another cell phone.
- 2.5 MMS - Multimedia Messaging Service is a system that enables mobile phones to send and receive pictures and sound clips as well as text messages.
- 2.6 iMessage - Apple iMessage (Apple instant message) is an instant messenger service developed by Apple Inc. that allows end users to send texts, documents, photos, videos, locations, contact information and group messages over Wi-Fi, 3G or LTE networks to other iOS or OS X users.

3.0 DEPARTMENTS AFFECTED

This policy shall apply to all City employees, and elected and appointed officials.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Text Messaging Only Allowed on City-Owned Devices

City employees are only allowed to send and receive transitory text messages related to City business on a City issued phone. Text messaging City business on a personally-owned device is not allowed.

4.2 Nature of Content Allowed in Text Message

Text messaging should only be used to send messages of “transitory” nature.

Messages relating to actions and outcomes of City business should be handled via email. No personal or exempt information shall be sent over text message, including

but not limited to: attorney-client privileged communication, social security numbers, credit card numbers, and passwords.

Below is a list of examples that show when text messaging can be used, and when it should not.

Allowed to Text	Not Allowed to Text
I'll be late to the meeting.	I'll be late, but I think we should appoint "_____" to the "XYZ" committee.
I just sent you an email.	We need a decision on the preferred alternative for this "_____" public contract. What do you think?
Could you please call me?	Use the following language in the press release "Announcing...."
The Mayor is trying to get in touch with you.	The Mayor wants to know your thoughts on city council proposal for "_____".
Can you pull the elected/appointed official out of this meeting?	We need to schedule a closed door meeting with So and So Official and the other board members for later today.
Can you cover me in today's meeting?	We need to meet with all the stake holders about this issue.
I emailed you a draft, please review.	Use this language in the staff report: "_____"
We're out of paper clips.	Office Depot has a best price on paper clips. I'll send you the link so you can buy some for us.
Please review the list of trees to be removed on the SharePoint site.	Please remove the hazardous tree at _____ park.

4.3 Deleting Text Messages off Phones

Employees shall delete transitory text messages from their City phone as soon as they are no longer needed.

4.4 Responding to Public Records Requests

Text messages are subject to public disclosure under the Public Records Act. If the City receives a public records request for any text message correspondence, the City Clerk's Office will ask staff to produce any responsive text messages that exist on their City phones at the time of the request.

4.5 Text Messaging Not Allowed While Driving

Employees must follow all laws regarding sending, reading, or writing a text message while driving.

4.6 Exceptions to Policy

Emergency Response

Text messaging is an important method of communication for employees working in the field responding to an uncommon or major emergency, and is allowed to relay important and time sensitive information. The retention period for these messages is six (6) years after the matter has been resolved/recovery completed and then transfer to the State for appraisal.

To comply with these retention requirements, the City will use third-party archive software to retain and search for text messages. The text messages of the following City positions will be archived for a period of seven (7) years:

- Community Services Manager
- Emergency Management Coordinator
- Customer Response Team Supervisor
- Customer Response Team Representatives

All other text messages sent or received by employees not listed above, that relate to emergency response and are not archived, must be saved for the length of their retention. It is the responsibility of each City employee sending/receiving the text message to contact the City Clerk's Office/Information Services to request assistance in exporting the text message(s) off the phone.