

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Department Notice



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A Message from Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy regarding State Department Records Responsibilities and Policy

As the Senior Agency Official (SAO) for records, it is my responsibility to ensure that we maintain the documentation of all that we do in the performance of our official duties, not only because it is required by law and is a good business practice, but because it is the right thing to do.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) have recently issued joint guidance on managing email that is consistent with Department policy. This guidance serves as a reminder to ALL employees regardless of rank or position -- including Foreign Service and Civil Service employees, contractors, When Actually Employed (WAEs) employees, and Locally Employed Staff (LES) of the Department -- that we are responsible for creating records necessary to document our activities, in addition to the proper management and preservation of records. These responsibilities are applicable to all records made or received in the conduct of agency business, regardless of physical format or media, including e-mail.

In short, as a condition of our employment with the USG, employees at every level have both a legal responsibility and a business obligation to ensure that the documentation of their official duties is captured, preserved, managed, protected and accessible in official government systems. This includes email.

Through Presidential initiatives and under the leadership of OMB and NARA, this Administration is moving aggressively to ensure we capture the essential documentation of what we do for ourselves and for posterity. It's important for you to know that the public appetite for our contemporary records is huge. The historical records of the State Department are the most accessed of all the agency records archived at the National Archives. So, in continuing our long standing tradition of record keeping - of preserving our history - it is imperative we leverage new technologies to ensure officials and the public today, as well as future generations, will know what we have done to promote our foreign policy mission with its related programs, operations and activities.

With that in mind, we recently reminded senior officials and other selected employees of their

records responsibilities, and provided instructions for preserving the e-mail of senior officials. See 14 STATE 111506 and my August 28, 2014 memorandum, "Senior Officials' Records Management Responsibilities." Both are available on the [Department's Records Management website](#).

While employees, including senior officials, may delete personal e-mails, they should be aware that the definition of a personal e-mail is very narrow. The only e-mails that are personal or non-record are those that do not relate to or affect the transaction of Government business. Departing employees are also reminded they may take with them only personal papers and non-record materials, subject to review by records officers to ensure compliance with federal records laws and regulations. All federal records generated by employees, including senior officials, belong to the Department of State.

In addition to the responsibility for preserving the documentation of official activities insofar as it is captured in email, employees generally should not use private e-mail accounts (e.g., Gmail, AOL, Yahoo, etc.) for official business. However, in those very limited circumstances when it becomes necessary to do so, the email messages covering official business sent from or received in a personal account must be captured and preserved in one of the Department's official electronic records systems (i.e., SMART or POEMS). The best way for employees to ensure this is to forward e-mail messages from a private account to their respective State account. Private email accounts should not be used for classified information.

I appreciate your cooperation in adhering to this policy guidance. This is an essential part of your official responsibilities. Further instructions will be forthcoming, as well as codification of this policy in the FAM. Should you have any questions, please address them to Records-DL@state.gov or visit the [Department's Records Management website](#) for more information. As part of the Department's records management responsibility there is an on-going effort to promulgate guidance that covers such technologies as email, instant messaging, social media and other online tools that are becoming more widely used.

Patrick F. Kennedy

Under Secretary for Management

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