



Policy: **Personal Use Of City Property**
Adopted: M2007-0143
Effective: 10/1/2007
Revised: 7/13/2021

Purpose To comply with Northfield, Minnesota City Code, Division 2, Sec. 2-126B(BF1). To ensure city employees, generally, do not use city property for personal purposes.

Policy No employee shall use City equipment, vehicles, facilities or materials for personal purposes or otherwise conduct personal business, except as allowed by established City policy. ~~No personal business of any kind shall be conducted during business hours.~~

Telephone Use It is ~~vital~~ important that City telephones be kept free in order to answer inquiries from the public and to conduct City business in an orderly, efficient and effective manner; ~~therefore~~ ~~personal~~ personal phone calls made or received while at work should be limited to those absolutely necessary and should be completed as quickly as possible.

~~Long distance calls must be charged to an employee's credit card, personal phone card or home telephone number or placed as a collect call or employee may use a personnel phone card.~~



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Cellular Phone Use

Cellular phones are intended for the use of city employees in the conduct of their work for the city. Supervisors are responsible for the cellular telephones assigned to their employees and will exercise discretion in their use. Nothing in this policy will limit supervisor discretion to allow reasonable and prudent personal use of such telephones or equipment provided that:

- Its use in no way limits the conduct of work of the employee or other employees.
- No personal profit is gained or outside employment is served.
- All employees are expected to follow applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations regarding the use of cell phones at all times. Employees whose job responsibilities include regular or occasional driving and who are issued a cell phone for business use are expected to refrain from using their phone while driving. Safety must come before all other concerns. Regardless of the circumstances and in accordance with Minnesota law, employees are required to use hands-free operations or pull off into a parking lot and safely stop the vehicle before placing or accepting a call. Employees are encouraged to refrain from discussion of complicated or emotional matters and to keep their eyes on the road while driving at all times. Special care should be taken in situations where there is traffic or inclement weather, or the employee is driving in an unfamiliar area. Hands-free equipment will be provided with City-issued phones to facilitate the provisions of this policy.
- Reading/sending text messages, making or receiving phone calls, emailing, video calling, scrolling/typing, accessing a webpage, or using non-navigation applications while driving is strictly prohibited.
 - In accordance with State law, there is an exception to hands free cell phone operations to obtain emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency or serious traffic hazard or prevent a crime from being committed. There is also a State law exception for authorized emergency vehicles while in the performance of official duties.
- Employees who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the use of their phone while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions.

Alternately, a supervisor may authorize an employee to use his/her own personal phone for city business and be reimbursed by the city for those calls.

Regardless of who pays the bill, cell phone records about city business are subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. What this means is that if a request were received, the city would be under the obligation to determine what information is public data and what information is private data and would need access to the employee's phone records and possibly the phone itself in order to provide the data that is being requested. ~~Therefore, the~~ The best practice is to limit usage of personal



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cell phones for city business to that which is truly necessary or be prepared to produce your cell phone and the associated records if needed.

An employee will not be reimbursed for business-related calls without prior authorization from his/her supervisor. Supervisors may also prohibit employees from carrying their own personal cell phones during working hours if it interferes with performance of their job duties.

Use of public resources by city employees for personal gain and/or private use including, but not limited to, outside employment or political campaign purposes, is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action which may include termination and/or criminal prosecution, depending on the circumstances. Incidental and occasional personal use may be permitted with the consent of the supervisor.

Personal calls will be made or received only when absolutely necessary. Such calls must not interfere with working operations and are to be completed as quickly as possible.

In cases where the city does not regard accounting for personal calls to be unreasonable or administratively impractical due to the minimal cost involved, personal calls made by employees on a city-provided cellular phone must be paid for by the employee through reimbursement to the city based on actual cost listed on the city's phone bill.

Procedures

It is the objective of the City of Northfield to prevent and correct any abuse or misuse of cellular telephones through the application of this policy. Employees who abuse or misuse such telephones may be subject to disciplinary action.

Responsibility

The city administrator, or designee, will have primary responsibility for implementation and coordination of this policy. All supervisors will be responsible for enforcement within their departments.

Copy Machine

Employees may make personal photocopies on City machines. Cost of copies are as provided in the fee scheduled adopted by City Council. See the City Clerk for current copy charges. The employee must pay the Finance Department for any copies that are made. Personal copying cannot interfere with City business and must be done on the employee's own time.



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- Fax Machine** Employees may send personal local faxes and may receive personal local and long-distance faxes at the City, provided the faxing does not interfere with City business.
- Employees may send or receive personal long-distance faxes but must reimburse the City. Cost per page is determined by the fee schedule as adopted by City Council. See the City Clerk for current fees. The employee must pay the Finance Department for any long-distance faxes that are sent.
- Postage** Employees are not allowed to use postage (stamps, meters or internet accounts) for personal use under any circumstances.
- Electronic Media** See section 4.26, Electronic Media Usage.
- City Letterhead** Employees cannot use City letterhead for correspondence not involving City business or to express personal conclusions, give letters of reference or state points of view. Someone outside the organization may view such use as an official position of the City.
- Tools & Equipment** City tools and equipment are not to be used for anything other than City purposes, unless it is to assist an employee in an emergency situation [and no other reasonable alternative exists to assist like any other member of the general public](#) (i.e., a car which needs to be jump-started in a snowstorm). Employees or friends may not use tables, chairs, ladders, tools, equipment, office equipment, etc. for personal use.
- Public Buildings** Public buildings are to be used for City operations only and are not to be used by anyone for personal reasons [except as otherwise established for the general public](#). Employees or friends may not use the facilities for non ~~work-work~~-related activities such as washing vehicles, tuning engines, rotating tires, meetings, etc. Such facilities may be used to assist an employee in an emergency only [and no other reasonable alternative exists to assist like any other member of the general public](#).
- Exceptions** Picnic tables and barricades that are available to the public to rent are also available to any City employee following the same rules and regulations as the public.
- Occasionally, contractors requiring tools and equipment to work on a specific project relative to City business may be an exception to the policy. These exceptions are authorized in writing and kept on file by the Department Director.
- City Vehicles** See Section 4.20 in this Handbook for information relating to City vehicle use.
- Violation** Any violation of this policy will result in discipline up to and including discharge.
- Additional Information** [See Section 4.50 in this Handbook for further information on the City's Ethical Standard of Conduct.](#)^[BF2]