

## APPENDIX B

## TELEPHONE USE

## 1 PURPOSE

This appendix establishes policies and assigns responsibility for the management and use of telephones within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

## 2 Background

USDA relies on telecommunications systems and services to help it administer Federal programs and serve the public. The Department spends millions of dollars annually through the General Services Administration Federal Technology Service programs and on hundreds of commercial carrier networks to carry out USDA's broad missions and serve customer needs. Managers responsible for these systems within agencies and staff offices must be proactive in educating employees on telephone abuse and mitigating the risk of telephone abuse, waste and fraud to their systems.

## 3 REFERENCES

Source	Publication	Title/Subject
Congress	5 U.S.C. 552	Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
Congress	P.L. 103-329	Government Telephones in Private Residences
GSA FPMR	101-35.201	Use of Government Telephone Systems
GSA	Handbook	Flexiplace: Questions and Answers on Management Issues
GSA	Handbook	Flexiplace: Questions and Answers on Computer and Telephone Issues
OPM	Memorandum	Alternative Workplace for Personnel Arrangements(Flexiplace) Directors
USDA/HRM	Handbook	Policy and Guide for a Family-Friendly Workplace
USDA	DR 1710-1	Interception and Monitoring of Telephone and Non-Telephone Conversations

## 4 ABBREVIATIONS

FPMR	-	Federal Property Management Regulation
FTSP	-	Federal Telephone System Payments
GSA	-	General Services Administration
LEC	-	Local Exchange Carrier
NFC	-	National Finance Center
OPM	-	Office of Personnel Management
USDA	-	United States Department of Agriculture

## 5 POLICY

### a Use of Government Telephones

Government telephone systems (including cellular telephones and calls over commercial systems which will be paid for by the Government) are in place for the conduct of official business or limited personal use as outlined in the Main Body section of this Directive. Official calls may include emergency calls and calls which the agency determines are necessary in the interest of the Government. Supervisors are responsible for the proper management of telephone usage, including cellular, within their jurisdiction. The use of cellular technology does not preclude the agency's responsibility for inventory control, billing accountability, and the appropriate acquisition justification.

(1) Criteria for Authorized Limited Personal Use. Use of Government telephone systems for limited personal use may be authorized as being in the interest of the Government if such use satisfies the following criteria:

- (a) It does not adversely affect the performance of official duties by the employee or the employee's organization;
- (b) It is of reasonable duration and frequency;
- (c) It reasonably could not have been made at another time, or;
- (d) It is provided for in a collective bargaining agreement.

(2) Examples of Authorized Use. Some examples of authorized use by employees that are consistent with the previously stated criteria [Section 4, a, (1)] are:

- (a) Calls to notify family, doctor, etc., when an employee is injured on the job.
- (b) Calls to notify family of a schedule change while traveling on Government business and delays occur due to official business or transportation.
- (c) While traveling on Government business, a brief call to his or her residence (but not more than an average of one call per day).
- (d) Calls to advise his or her family of the change in schedule or to make alternate transportation or child care arrangements.

- (e) Brief daily calls to locations within the local commuting area to speak to spouse, minor children, or other family members whose "close association" constitutes a "family relationship" (or those responsible for them, e.g., school or day care center).
  - (f) Brief calls to locations within the local commuting area that can be reached only during working hours, such as local government agencies or physicians, or to arrange for emergency repairs to his or her residence or automobile.
- (3) Long Distance Calls. Personal calls that must be made during working hours may be made over the commercial long distance network if the call is consistent with previously stated criteria [Section 4, a, (1)] and is:
- (a) Charged to the employee's home phone number or other non-Government number (third number call); or
  - (b) Made to an 800, 877, 888, or other toll-free number; or
  - (c) Charged to the called party if a non-Government number (collect call); or
  - (d) Charged to a personal credit card or prepaid debit card.
- (4) Prohibitions. Listed below are PROHIBITED practices in accordance with Federal Property Management Regulation (FPMR) 101-35.201 and 5 CFR 735.205. Willful violation may result in criminal, civil, or administrative action, to include suspension or dismissal.
- (a) Use of the following services, equipment, or facilities for other than official business, except emergency calls and calls which the agency determines are necessary in the interest of the Government:
    - 1 Federal Telecommunications System (FTS2000/2001);
    - 2 Government provided long distance telephone service other than FTS2000/2001; or
    - 3 A commercial network (e.g., 10-10-321) where the Government pays for the call.

(b) Use of any Government provided telephone service, equipment, or facility for calls which are permitted in the criteria but significantly interfere with the conduct of Government business.

(c) Making an unauthorized telephone call with the intent to later reimburse the Government.

(d) Use of "900" calls to include dialing a toll free number which will switch to a "900" call, either on or off the FTS2000/2001 network.

b Collect Calls.

Collect calls (calls placed from a non-government number to a government number) and third party calls are prohibited except for official business and only when authorized in writing by the Agency Administrator or Staff Office Director. Since a collect surcharge is charged by the telephone company, it is strongly recommended that one of the following efficient and cost-effective methods be used in lieu of collect calls:

(1) Use of FTS2000/2001 Federal Calling Card for employees making frequent long-distance calls;

(2) Use of 1-800, 1-877, or 1-888 Service for mission requirements to satisfy external customers calls or public access to government information; or

(3) Use of FTS contract prepaid debit cards.

c Installation of Government Telecommunications Resources in Private Residences.

Government telecommunications resources may be installed for the conduct of official Government business in private residences of USDA employees as follows:

(1) Agencies and staff offices may use appropriated funds to install telephone lines, equipment, and to pay monthly charges, in any private residence of an employee who has been authorized to work at home in accordance with OPM guidelines and PL 103-329.

(2) Agencies and staff offices shall ensure that adequate safeguards against private misuse exist, and that the telecommunications resources are necessary for direct support of the agency's mission.

(3) Agencies and staff offices should follow the flexiplace guidelines established by GSA, regarding the installation of Government telecommunications resources in private residences.

d Listening-in or Recording of Telephone Conversations.

Agencies should establish internal approval and accountability procedures for listening-in or recording of telephone conversations. Care must be exercised not to confuse answering machines with devices capable of listening-in and recording of telephone conversations. DR 1710-1, Interception and Monitoring of Telephone and Non-telephone Conversations, clearly defines the specific circumstances and procedures to utilize these devices.

(1) Employees who participate in a monitored or recorded telephone conversation must make all parties aware of the monitoring or recording. Monitoring or recording of telephone conversations is prohibited except under the conditions described in DR 1710-1.

(2) If speaker-phones or other audio teleconference equipment are used, all parties shall be informed of the names or number of persons listening in. Use of tape recorders or verbatim recording of conversations is prohibited without the unanimous consent of all parties.

e Telephone Abuse and Fraud

Agencies and staff offices shall establish internal procedures to determine the risk of and vulnerability to telephone fraud, waste and abuse of their networks. Agencies shall implement cost-effective actions to minimize their exposure to telephone abuse. Examples to minimize exposure would be to review and verify telephone billing information, block collect and third party calls through the Local Exchange Carrier (LEC) and educate employees on acceptable use policies.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

a The Office of the Chief Information Officer will:

(1) Evaluate requests for telecommunications services, facilities, and equipment;

(2) Establish policy and procedures for the management and cost control of telephone systems;

(3) Provide advice and assistance to agencies and staff offices regarding telephone services and facilities; and

(4) Serve as liaison for telephone related activities and interchange between USDA and GSA and other central agencies;

b Agencies and Staff Offices will:

(1) Ensure that the telecommunications system, including the Government-provided long distance network, is used for official Government business and authorized purposes by authorized personnel;

- (2) Ensure that only the appropriate level of service (e.g., local, FTS2000/2001, commercial, international, etc.) is furnished each employee;
- (3) Establish limitations and control over the issuance of Federal Calling cards and AT&T pre-paid calling cards;
- (4) Establish a call detail program to help control all telecommunications costs. (See DR 3040-2 for guidance);
- (5) Review and verify telephone billing to ensure that telecommunications services and equipment that are billed are provided and necessary. Monitor these bills for telephone abuse and fraud. Coordinate with the National Finance Center (NFC) and the Exchange Carrier to resolve any billing issues; and
- (6) Annually review and provide the National Finance Center (NFC) with an updated AD-474-Transmittal-Telephone and Utilities for telecommunications services.

## 7 FORMS

When establishing new accounts for telecommunications services, agencies and staff offices shall submit a AD-474-Transmittal-Telephone and Utilities or AD-955-GSA Telephone Transmittal Form in accordance with NFC's Voucher and Invoice Payments Manual, Chapter 3, Section 3- Telephones.

## 8 DEFINITIONS

**Cellular Telephones.** A mobile communications system that uses a combination of radio transmission and conventional land-line telephone switching to permit telephone communication to and from mobile users within a specified area. Note: In cellular telephone systems, large geographical areas are segmented into many smaller areas, i.e., cells, each of which has its own radio transmitters and receivers and a single controller interconnected with the public switched telephone network.

**Local Commuting Area.** The local duty station's immediate commuting area is defined as the area from which an employee regularly commutes, however local commuting area assumes local, as opposed to long distance calls and connections.

**AD-474-Transmittal-Telephone.** The AD-474 is used within USDA to establish telephone accounts which involve recurring monthly charges.

**AD-955-GSA Telephone Transmittal.** The AD-955 is used for establishing and maintaining GSA-billed commercial telephone accounts paid through the Federal Telephone System Payments (FTSP).