

STANDARD ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

29.01.99.M1.17 Information Resources – Privacy

Approved July 18, 2005

Next Scheduled Review: Currently Under Review

Supplements [University Rule 29.01.99.M1](#)

1. GENERAL

Privacy policies are mechanisms used to establish the responsibilities and limits for system administrators and users in providing privacy in university information resources. The University has the right to examine information on information resources which are under the control or custody of the University. The general right to privacy is extended to the electronic environment to the extent possible.

However, there should be no expectation of privacy beyond that which is expressly provided by applicable privacy laws. Privacy is limited by the Texas Public Information Act, administrative review, computer system administration, and audits.

2. APPLICABILITY

This Standard Administrative Procedure applies to electronic information created, sent, received, or stored on information resources owned, leased, administered, or otherwise under the custody and control of the University.

The purpose of the implementation of this SAP is to provide a set of measures that will mitigate information security risks associated with privacy issues. There may also be other or additional measures that will provide appropriate mitigation of the risks. The assessment of potential risks and the application of appropriate mitigation measures are to be determined by the information resource owner or their designee. In accordance with Texas Administrative Code 202 - Information Security Standards, each department and/or resource owner may elect not to implement some or all of the risk mitigation measures provided in this SAP based on information security risk management decisions and business functions. Such risk management decisions must be documented in the annual ISAAC report (See [University Rule 29.01.99.M1](#)).

The audience is all users and administrators of university information resources.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Confidential Information**: information that is excepted from disclosure requirements under the provisions of applicable state or federal law, e.g., the Texas Public Information Act.

- 3.2 Information Resources (IR): the procedures, equipment, and software that are designed, employed, operated, and maintained to collect, record, process, store, retrieve, display, and transmit information or data.
- 3.3 File Owner: Holder (assignee) of the computer account which controls a file. Not necessarily the owner in the sense of property.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Privacy of information shall be provided to users of university information resources consistent with obligations of Texas and Federal law and/or secure operation of university information resources.
- 4.2 In the normal course of their duties, system administrators may examine user activities, files, electronic mail, and printer listings to gather sufficient information to diagnose and correct problems with system software or hardware.
 - 4.2.1 In order to protect against hardware and software failures, backups of all data stored on university information resources may be made. System administrators have the right to examine the contents of these backups to gather sufficient information to diagnose and correct problems with system software or hardware. It is the user's responsibility to find out retention policies for any data of concern.
 - 4.2.2 The organization unit head may designate certain individuals or functional areas who may monitor user activities and/or examine data solely to determine if unauthorized access to a system or data is occurring or has occurred. If files are examined, the file owner will be informed as soon as practical, subject to delay in the case of an on-going investigation.
 - 4.2.3 Files owned by individual users are to be considered as private, whether or not they are accessible by other users. The ability to read a file does not imply consent to read that file. Under no circumstances may a user alter a file that does not belong to him or her without prior consent of the file's owner. The ability to alter a file does not imply consent to alter that file.
 - 4.2.4 Some individually owned files are by definition open access. Examples include Unix plan files, Web files made available through a system-wide facility and files made available on an anonymous ftp server. Any authorized user that can access these files may assume consent has been given.

- 4.3 If access to information is desired without the consent and/or knowledge of the file owner or if inappropriate use of TAMU information resources is suspected, files may be reviewed without the consent and/or knowledge of the file owner if that review is part of the process of [Rule 32.01.99.M1, Complaint Procedures for Electronic Information](#).
- 4.4 If criminal activity is suspected, the UPD or other appropriate law enforcement agency must be notified. All further access to information on university information resources must be in accordance with directives from law enforcement agencies.
- 4.5 Information resource owners or custodians will provide access to information requested by auditors in the performance of their jobs. Notification to file owners will be as directed by the auditors.
- 4.6 Other than exceptions in 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, access to information by someone other than the file owner requires the owner's explicit, advance consent.
- 4.7 Unless otherwise provided for, individuals whose relationship with the university is terminated (e.g., student graduates; employee takes new job; visitors depart) are considered to cede ownership to the information resource custodian. Custodians should determine what information is to be retained and delete all other.
- 4.8 The university collects and processes many different types of information from third parties. Much of this information is confidential and shall be protected in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations (e.g., Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, Texas Administrative Code 202).
- 4.9 Individuals who have special access to information because of their position have the absolute responsibility to not take advantage of that access. If information is inadvertently gained (e.g., seeing a copy of a test or homework) that could provide personal benefit, the individual has the responsibility to notify both the owner of the data and the organizational unit head.
- 4.10 University web sites available to the general public shall contain a Privacy Statement such as that found at <http://www.tamu.edu/home/statements/privacy.html>.
- 4.11 Users of TAMU information resources shall call CIS Helpdesk (845-3800) to report any compromise of security which could lead to divulging confidential information including, but not limited to, posting social security numbers to the internet.

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