

# City of Richmond

## Administrative Manual

**SUBJECT:** Use of City Telephones and Voice Mail Systems

**SECTION:** Information Technology

**POLICY NUMBER:** AP 657

**INITIAL DATE PREPARED:** August 25, 1999

**LAST DATE REVISED:** August 25, 1999

### **I. Purpose**

To assure that all employees of the City of Richmond are aware of and observe specific, uniform conduct and procedures when operating City telephones.

### **II. Policy**

- A. The City's reputation as a public body and the cooperation it receives from the community and its customers are based upon the City's ability to provide services. For many people, their first and perhaps only contact directly with the City of Richmond staff is by telephone and it is essential that a positive impression be made during this contact. It is important, therefore, that all City employees observe the same standard and fundamental rules of telephone etiquette and procedure.
- B. City Council members and certain City employees whose positions require them, will be issued Telephone Calling Cards with a number which shall be provided to the Telephone Company operator when a call is placed, to identify the caller. Use of Telephone Calling Card numbers may be authorized to the staff of those issued Telephone Calling Cards on a call per call basis.
- C. All information received or stored on City telephone voice mail is the property of the City of Richmond. Employees should not have any expectation of privacy when using telephone voice mail.
- D. Security of the telephone voice mail system is the responsibility of each employee/user. Each user shall safeguard their password. In the event of any breach of system security, employees shall notify their supervisor immediately. Supervisors and/or employees shall notify Information Technology immediately. Information Technology may remove access of any employee.

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- E. Voice mail should not be used in any case where a record of any event, occurrence or statement is required or intended to be retained by the City in the ordinary course of business.
- F. Voice mail is intended to fulfill the same general function as ordinary daily verbal communications among City staff (i.e.; a record of a communication should not be made through voice mail but should be made in a formal interoffice memo or letter). For example, requests to the City Attorney's office for legal advice or legal services, and the City Attorney's responses to such requests, should not be made by voice mail.
- G. Many City policies apply to the use of the voice mail system. For example, City policies concerning office procedures, solicitation, harassment and reporting absences all apply. Employees who fail to comply with the voice mail policy or other related City policies governing voice mail usage are subject to discipline, up to and including termination.
- H. Unauthorized accessing of voice mail by unauthorized users is a violation of City policy and grounds for disciplinary action.

### **III. Procedure**

#### **A. Receiving Telephone Calls**

- 1. When an employee's assigned telephone rings, it shall be answered promptly. Phones should be answered, where possible, in person rather than letting them ring to Voice Mail.
- 2. When receiving a telephone call, an attempt shall be made to answer or respond to appropriate inquiries directly. If this is not possible and the call must be transferred, efforts should be made to transfer the call to the proper department.
- 3. All telephone conversations shall be conducted in as courteous, helpful, and

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business-like manner as possible. The following greeting shall be used to answer telephones.

Greeting; Name of Department/Division; Your first name; Offer assistance.

For example:

“Good morning . . . City Manager’s Office . . .  
Rochelle speaking . . . May I help you?”

4. Collect calls (calls that reverse billing to a City number) and third number billing (billing a call to a City number) calls are not encouraged.

### **B. Voice Mail System**

1. The City Voice Mail system is designed to extend telephone answering capabilities. Although intended for City business, it is natural that personal messages may be left on the system. Personal messages shall be deleted after being played by the user. The City maintains the right to monitor messages and fully administer the operation and maintenance of the voice mail system.
2. City Voice Mail access is available to employees following procedures in AP 653.
3. Security of the telephone voice mail system is the responsibility of each employee/user. Each user shall safeguard their password. In the event of any breach of system security, employees shall notify their supervisor immediately. Supervisors and/or employees shall notify Information Technology immediately. Information Technology may remove access of any employee.

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### C. Placing Telephone Calls

1. Local/Bay Area personal calls made using City business telephones shall be limited to only those of necessity and shall be limited to the time required to communicate the message. Calling cards billed to private (home) numbers should be obtained by those needing to make long distance calls from City phones.
2. Those wishing to bill business related calls to the City are requested to obtain a Telephone Calling Card number on a call by call basis from their Department Director. Collect calls (calls that reverse billing to a City number) and third number billing calls (billing a call to a City number) are not encouraged. Calling Cards will be acquired following normal procurement procedures.
3. The following procedures shall be observed when placing these credit card calls or long distance calls:
  - a. **Telephone Calling Card Calls:** City Council members and certain City employees whose positions require them, have been issued cards with a number which shall be provided to the Telephone Company operator when the call is placed, to identify the caller. This number appears on the bill submitted to the City. Those wishing to bill business related calls to the City are requested to obtain a Telephone Calling Card number on a call by call basis from their Department Director. Telephone Calling Cards will be acquired following normal procurement procedures. Employees issued Telephone Calling Cards shall be responsible for all calls made using the card and shall be responsible for timely billing payment.
  - b. **Long Distance Calls Placed Person to Person through the City**

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**Telephones:** Person to Person calls shall be placed only when the party to whom the call is made is in a foreign country or when it may not be reasonable to expect availability of the party called.

### **D. Record Retention**

1. All voice mail messages are considered City property. The City reserves the right to access and disclose the contents of employee voice mail messages, but will do so only when it has a legitimate business need to do so.
2. The Information Technology Department will include voice mail messages in their routine data back-up process but will not guarantee a set retention period, and will regularly purge these messages on a frequent basis.
3. Voice mail messages will not be considered records for purposes of state record retention and destruction statutes, and will be considered records which are not retained by the City in the ordinary course of business for purposes of the California Public Records Act. Specific voice mail messages shall not be destroyed after receipt of a subpoena or Public Record Act request that covers such voice mail records except after written approval of the City Attorney. Specific voice mail messages that the City Attorney requests not be destroyed for legal reasons shall be retained until the City Attorney gives written approval for their destruction.