
BAS POLICY ON TELEPHONE/INTERNET USAGE AND MONITORING AT WORK

This notice covers all BAS staff and visitors whether at Cambridge, on board ship or in Antarctica. It should be read in conjunction with NERC Policy No 1.5 'Electronic Communications'.

1. Background

In 2003 the Government 'Information Commissioner' published an addition to the Data Protection Code covering monitoring at work. This Admin Notice outlines BAS policy in relation to the Information Commissioner's document to cover the usage and monitoring of telephones, the Internet and security cameras (CCTV).

2. Telephone Usage and Telephone Monitoring

BAS telephone systems are for business use. Occasional and reasonable personal use is permitted provided that calls are kept short (e.g. 5 minutes), within the UK, and do not interfere with the performance of an individual's duties or the duties of others. Calls overseas must be for business purposes only, unless authorised by a line manager. Abuse of the telephone system may lead to disciplinary action.

Staff deployed to BAS Polar Research Stations or on BAS vessels are required to purchase a pre-paid phone card if they wish to make personal calls or to obtain a BT Odyssey card which can be used to direct call charges to personal bank accounts. Further details concerning this can be obtained through Operations and Logistics (OPAL) at: http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/staff/antarctic_visitors/introduction.php

The content of telephone calls and voice mails are not currently monitored, and will not be monitored on a routine basis (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. police investigation). Staff should be aware however that itemised telephone bills are provided to BAS and that these may be examined periodically to determine usage of the system.

BAS will monitor the content of telephone calls and voice mails where nuisance calls to staff and other similar activities are identified. Any active monitoring of the content of calls will only be undertaken with the written agreement of the Director or other Deputy Director, and normally with the agreement of the member of staff involved (unless we are advised by external authorities not to proceed on this basis).

3. Internet Usage and Internet Monitoring

The Internet is provided for business use. Occasional personal use is permitted provided it does not interfere with the performance of an individual's duties or the duties of others. (Note: On ships/Antarctic stations staff are additionally expected to comply with any local guidelines regarding access to the Internet and Internet usage.

Staff/visitors must not view, download, copy or distribute any material from the Internet that could be considered offensive or otherwise illegal, for example material containing racist/sexist/homophobic terminology or pornography. Access by 'accident' will not be considered a defence. Abuse of this regulation will be considered a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary and or legal action.

Internet usage will not be actively monitored on a routine basis. Staff should however be aware that usage records are held by BAS, and we reserve the right to investigate if we suspect abuse of the system or that illegal/offensive material is being viewed or downloaded. Any active monitoring of staff will only be undertaken with the written agreement of the Director or Deputy Director for a specified period of time.

4. Personal Web Pages, Wikis, Blogs (web-based forums and diaries)

Many people use the Web in a variety of ways including social networks, web pages and blogs, to keep in touch with friends and family whilst working overseas. BAS recognises that these can be a useful and enhanced way for staff to maintain contact with home, and permits Internet access for personal use where possible and within its capabilities (see also **Admin Notice 06/07 Use of BASnet**). There are however important things for staff to be aware of when publishing anything on the Web.

The general public are naturally interested in the Antarctic, in BAS, its staff and activities, and we know that people access the blogs and web pages of our employees and visitors on a regular basis. Any such personal web pages or blogs could therefore be interpreted as representing BAS and the BAS/NERC viewpoint.

We expect a sensible, sensitive and professional approach from all authors of these pages. If we become aware of any posted photos or information that is/are inaccurate, potentially defamatory or may otherwise bring BAS or NERC into disrepute we will seek immediate withdrawal of the material and may pursue disciplinary and or legal action. For the purpose of clarity, unsuitable material includes anything that might reasonably cause offence or which would be considered socially unacceptable. Defamatory material may be anything that, in the opinion of senior management, may lead someone to have a worse opinion of BAS/NERC and its operation than before its publication (although nothing shall preclude an employee from making a protected disclosure in accordance with provisions set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996).

There is further important information on this subject in **Appendix A** which web authors need to familiarise themselves with. If an individual is still in doubt about the material they wish to publish they should seek advice from their Master/Base Commander/Head of Department in the first instance.

5. CCTV

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is used by BAS to assist with routine security, crime prevention and the detection and prosecution of offenders. The CCTV system is not used to record the routine activities of BAS staff in relation to their normal business.

BAS retain video records for four weeks before over-writing them. The use of the system is reviewed annually by NERC.

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Appendix A

Important information for staff writing web diaries, wikis or blogs and contributing to social networking websites.

1. Remember that Internet sites are essentially public and can be read by anyone, not just families and friends.
2. BAS/NERC computing facilities must not be used to post or distribute material which might reasonably cause offence or which would be considered socially unacceptable or otherwise illegal.
3. Unless authorised to do, so staff must not give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of BAS or NERC.
4. Voicing complaints through blogs or websites is not an appropriate way to comment on organisational decisions or policy. Staff are required to use the appropriate channels to raise grievances, speaking with local management in the first instance.
5. NERC Policy No 6.4 'Whistleblowing' describes statutory protection in certain circumstances to those who disclose fraudulent, dangerous or criminal activities - but it should be noted that the Charter requires staff to use internal grievance procedures first.
6. Posting information which is privileged or has been supplied in confidence is not acceptable.
7. Permission should be obtained before posting photos or videos taken by people other than the author, with a credit given in the caption.