## *Policies and Benefits*

Information security for email

Email has become an everyday part of our personal and professional lives and, for many of us, our days begin and end reading, composing and sending email correspondence. Because it's such a common part of our lives, it is easy to forget how careless use of some email features can have a negative effect on information security.

Here are some examples of information security issues related to email, along with a few simple steps you can take to avoid trouble.

Autocomplete

Autocomplete is a useful feature for most email users; typing a portion of the recipient's name allows autocomplete to automatically select the recipient's address. Unfortunately, in an organization as large as TDCJ, it is easy for autocomplete to enter the wrong email address. You try to send an email to John Smith, a coworker in your office, but autocomplete selects John W. Smith in another agency office. If you don't catch the error, you might be giving confidential information to unauthorized recipients. To prevent this simple mistake, always double check the recipients name and email address before you hit send.
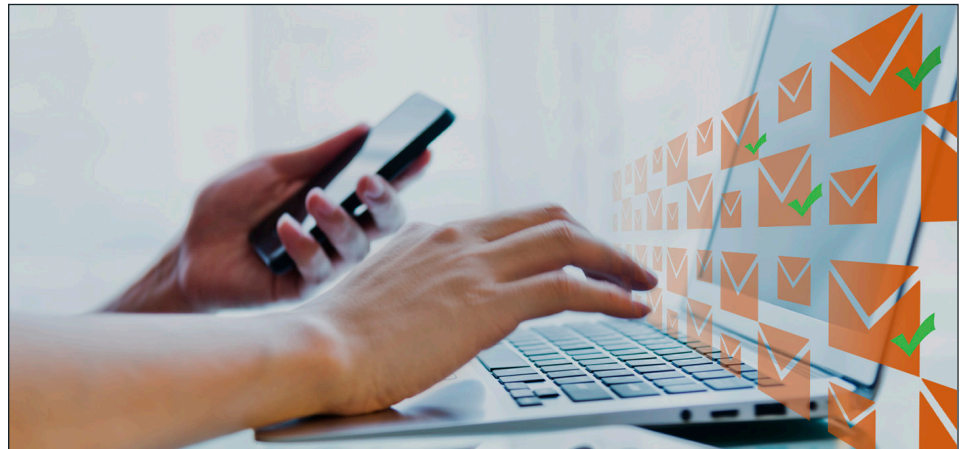
Cc/Bcc

These are abbreviations for "carbon copy" and "blind carbon copy," though very few of us still use carbon paper to create copies of correspondence. Both cc and bcc are easy ways to keep people informed, but both can cause trouble if used incorrectly. When you reply to a cc'd email, you must decide whether you want to reply only to the sender, or to everyone who was included in the original email's cc list. If your reply includes sensitive material, avoid using Reply All and be sure all recipients are authorized to receive the information.

Blind carbon copies allow you to include people in an email correspondence without notifying other recipients, but remember, if you privately send a copy of correspondence to your supervisor and they respond using Reply All, all recipients will know the original email was secretly bcc'd.

Distribution Lists

Distribution lists are collections of email addresses represented as a single email address. They are useful for sending mass emails, which sometimes go out to hundreds or thousands of people. Be careful to check the distribution list, as people may be added or removed without your knowledge. Also, when receiving email from a distribution list,

keep in mind that Reply All will send your email not only to the original sender, but also to everyone on the distribution list.

Privacy

Always keep in mind that email has very few privacy protections. Once sent, you lose control over your correspondence; it can be quickly and easily forwarded to anyone anywhere in the world, it can be posted on an easily searched public forum or archive, and it can become subject to a Public Information Act open records request. For these reasons, think twice before sending out any restricted information by email.

The Information Technology Division works hard to protect the agency's computer data and employees' personal information, but security precautions work only if users learn them and put them into action. If you have questions, comments or suggestions regarding information security at work, contact the Information Security Office by email at iso@tdcj.texas.gov or calling 936-437-1800.●