Digital Towpath Email Services Policy

This document is intended to clarify the agreement between Digital Towpath and its email system users.

The Digital Towpath Cooperative (DTC) provides domain-based email services to its members opting to use this service. Since it was first offered through Digital Towpath, email usage has not been metered nor has the number of accounts for a single domain been limited. Digital Towpath's mission is to support and encourage the use of technology by the smaller local governments in New York State. To that end, there have been no limits on usage for Digital Towpath services – in so much as possible.

In the eight years DTC has offered email services, many changes have occurred in the technologies used to provide email services and the environment within which email exists has undergone significant change. Email has become a primary method of communication within local governments and with their constituents. Increasingly, municipalities rely on email as an official communication medium. It is imperative that email is treated in the same professional manner as paper-based communications and rigorously managed in the same way as paper records.

Use of the internet brings threats. Those threats are ever-changing; consistently increasing in volume and rapidly increasing in complexity. Email is a primary vector for the introduction of malware into computer systems. Email is used to target what is often the weakest link in the protections designed to guard against those threats – the people using the system.

Digital Towpath Email Service, in itself, provides the transfer of messages to and from electronic mailboxes established on the Digital Towpath Zimbra Server and pass-through email addresses set up through a member's domain. Pass-through addresses do not hold messages on the DTC server. User accounts set up within a member's domain can accumulate messages on the DTC server or pass the messages to an email client, based on the user's email management schema. If a message is handled by a pass-through account or downloaded to a local client, it is not retrievable by Digital Towpath.

Digital Towpath takes no responsibility for messages any end user opts to store on its server. Although loss of messages stored on the server is not likely, retention is not guaranteed.

Records management responsibilities of local governments in New York include the retention, authentication, and retrieval when requested of all public records - including those in the form of email messages. Simply accumulating email messages in a mailbox on the email server does not constitute management of those messages, even if they have been organized into folders. In order to provide members with a management system that meets the requirements set out in statute; in keeping with its mission; and with the support of the NY State Archives, DTC has developed an email archiving system to capture messages as they leave or reach the Digital Towpath email server. This system, integrated into DTC's electronic records management system (ERMS), provides the necessary tools for the management of all records in electronic format.

Since a system for management of email is now a part of Digital Towpath's tools and services, certain restrictions have been imposed on the use of DTC's email services in order to protect the email system and encourage the use of good management practices. No Digital Towpath member is required to subscribe to DTC's email archiving system. However, its use is recommended.

Email system restrictions include:

- *DTC offers no guarantee of message retention on the Digital Towpath Email Server.*
- Each domain must designate a primary contact or system manager for email system use. This contact information must be kept up to date, by the member government. All correspondence related to use of the email system will be directed to the designated contact. Digital Towpath is not responsible for assuring that contact information is correct or for miscommunication due to incorrect contact information.
- Digital Towpath members using the DTC email service must have an email use policy[1] in effect that requires good email practice by those to whom email accounts within their domain are assigned. A copy of this policy must be submitted to Digital Towpath administrative staff upon initiation of email services and whenever the policy is updated.
- Mailbox Size:
    - DTC will continue to allow mailboxes unlimited storage on the email server. No interruption in email service will result from the retention of large numbers of messages. However, if any mailboxes in a domain exceed 2 GB[2] for more than a short period, the domain's primary contact will be alerted that the account owners should be required to reduce mailbox size by deleting messages from the email server or moving messages off the server. Retention of large amounts of email within a particular mailbox on the email server does not meet records management requirements and should be discouraged by local policy.
    - The Digital Towpath Email Archiving system provides reliable email preservation and management. Because this low-cost service is now available, those domains with mailboxes which consistently exceed 2 GB will be required to use email archiving in order to continue to use the DTC email service.
- Lock Out for Failed Login Attempts:
    - Five failed attempts within one hour will cause a lockout of the account for a period of one hour.
    - The designated primary contact for email services will be alerted to the situation.
    - Because this behavior indicates that the account may have been compromised, *DTC staff will not reactivate locked accounts.*
    - Repeated lockouts indicate that the account has been compromised and so will result in the account being permanently disabled.
- Passwords:
    - Must be at least 8 characters, including at least one numeral and at least one letter.
    - Must be changed periodically in accord with local policy, which should reflect the shortest practicable time period.

- Unused mail accounts:
    - To avoid misuse, members should delete accounts that are no longer needed as soon as possible.
    - In order to facilitate management of unused accounts, primary contacts will periodically receive reports of accounts which have not been logged into for more than 90 days.
- Use of local email clients:
    - Members are responsible for the use of local email clients.
    - DTC staff will confirm that an account is functioning correctly and work with the member to assure that it is set up correctly in Zimbra but are not responsible for set up of a local client.[3]
    - Account owners are encouraged to use the Zimbra web interface instead of a local client. For those domains with Email Archiving, using the Zimbra interface adds an additional level of control to the archiving process by automatically clearing copies of messages from the email server when they reach a set age. Messages are retained within the Email Archiving system unless moved or deleted from it by the member.
- Email filtering
    - DTC has arranged for the use of an external filtering system from Barracuda, a leader in email safety.
    - Members can subscribe to Barracuda management for their own domain and, from that, manage their own white and black lists as well as monitor account usage.[4]
- Responsibility for system security
    - DTC will do everything reasonably possible to insure that email services are secure when properly utilized.[5]
    - Members are responsible for the security of the technology they use to access the Digital Towpath Email Service. Minimum security measures apply to all devises that connect to email through the DTC email system whether directly or through other devises. They include[6]:
        - Frequent (at least weekly) scanning with up to date virus scanning software.
        - Automatic or frequent (at least weekly) manual update of all software and operating systems.
        - Attention to physical access including policy that requires users to lock devises when not in use.
        - Technology use policy that includes requirements for password strength and regular password changes as well as a prohibition from sharing user accounts or user account information.
    - *If DTC staff determine that a member is failing to attend to the security of its own technology, its domain will be blocked from DTC's email service.*

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1 Digital Towpath administrative staff will support members in the development of good email use policy in so far as they are able by providing examples of policies in effect in other member governments.

2 The typical text-only email message is less than 15 KB in size. A typical large email message with an image attachment is about 1 MB. In order to use 2 GB of storage, then, one would have to retain at least 2000 messages with large attachments or as many as 70,000 text-only messages.

3 DTC staff will continue to assist in setup where possible

4 More than 100 accounts - $300/yr; less than 100 accounts - $150/yr

5 In so far as possible using industry standard procedures

6 For more information about meeting minimum security requirements, visit http://www.dhses.ny.gov/ocs/.