



Important Please Read:

Why your government should be using official domain-based email

1. Follow records retention laws

If your employees or Elected Officials are using Gmail, Yahoo, AOL or your Internet Service Provider's service (e.g., Spectrum, Frontier, AT&T) email accounts, how are you able to enforce records retention policies and comply with open records laws? What would you do when:

- You receive a FOIL request that requires retrieving information from an employee's personal email account?
- You are required by law to retain records related to municipal business, but the ex-officials used personal email accounts that contain critical information that you must access.
- Employees must submit to an audit of their personal email accounts in order to satisfy litigation that requires you to produce specific records which are in personal email accounts.

Allowing the use of personal email accounts for official business doesn't give you any centralized way to manage records retention policies around emails and enforce archiving or deletion rules. You need an email system that ensures you can easily find, retain, and delete records consistent with any retention laws. You don't want to lose important communications related to your municipality to a personal email account.

2. Proper email security

When you use personal email, there is no good way to enforce password policies, detect suspicious user activity, and delete or deactivate email accounts if an employee or official leaves.

When using personal email accounts, you cannot oversee security measures like:

- Password best practices and multi-factor authentication (multi-factor authentication is not yet standard offering from Digital Towpath)
- Access and authorization to sensitive and confidential information
- Encryption – both at rest and in transit (i.e., sending and receiving emails)
- Antispam and Antivirus checking
- Data backup and disaster recovery

Without proper security measures enforced email accounts are easier for attackers to breach, putting your municipality's information at risk.

3. Control over email information

This is a huge risk related to personal email accounts. When an elected official or employee leaves, if they were using a personal email account, they take their email with them. Information belonging to the municipality is most likely gone.

How do you control data privacy around email information, easily transfer that information over to a new email account or deactivate a user when they leave. With email under the control of your municipality you can retain all email despite an employee leaving, deactivate their account, and control how that email information is stored and transferred.

4. Credibility and Professionalism

You wouldn't send a letter for your municipality on a piece of notebook paper, you would use stationery with proper municipally identifiable letterhead, so why send an email that isn't properly identifiable. Gmail and Yahoo do not identify to people who you are contacting them on behalf of.

In addition to issues with professionalism, you also lack credibility when communicating with the outside world. With everyone's cybersecurity awareness raised today; it looks suspicious when an email comes from a town that says mayor204@aol.com rather than mayorjohndoe@professionaltowndomain.com.

5. Spam filters trapping your emails

Spam filters are more triggered by emails that are likelier to be malicious. For example, an email coming from an aol.com-type of email address will more likely trigger a spam filter to block it versus a professional email with a legitimate domain. With most enterprise-level email platforms, a lot of automation goes on in the background to tell spam filters if an email is good or bad. You want to make sure your emails actually arrive in a person's inbox.

It is important for your employees and elected officials to use your government identifiable email address. No matter how small a municipality, it's necessary—and through your Digital Towpath annual membership – affordable. Consumer-grade email service may be free but it is risky and may end up costing you if something goes wrong as a result of taking this shortcut.

Your email with Digital Towpath is unlimited, professional, and secure—giving you the ability to manage users, comply with laws, and retain email records effectively.

Digital Towpath Email and Email archiving are part of your annual membership. If you are not currently using these both services, please reach out to us at:

<https://servicedesk.digitaltowpath.org>

We can help you get started today.

The link below will take you to a NYS Archives Document on Developing a Policy for Managing Email. Included within are sample policies. Please review carefully any sample policy to replace any passages that don't pertain your municipality's or New State laws or ordinances.

<https://dtp.digitaltowpath.org:10041/content/Generic/View/87:field=documents;/content/Documents/File/611.pdf>