

BULLETIN: ACCEPTABLE USE STANDARDS

DATE: APRIL 1, 2009

OBJECTIVE:

Provincial government Internet use policies require responsible and appropriate use of network resources. Because PLNet is part of the provincial government network, similar standards of use apply to PLNet users. The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify acceptable use standards and appropriate educational uses of PLNet.

ACCEPTABLE USE STANDARDS:

To manage network capacity and ensure optimal performance of the network:

- 1. Do not access Internet radio stations, or video services (typically referred to as “streaming” audio or video), unless the use is education related.**

These activities consume excessive network bandwidth and slow down PLNet for other users. They can also increase PLNet costs. For example, a class of 10 people regularly listening to an Internet radio station on desktop computers can increase Internet costs by \$500 a month. (See below for examples of appropriate education use.)

- 2. Do not engage in multi-player network gaming where data is continuously exchanged among players.**

Multiplayer Internet games (e.g., Quake, Counterstrike) continuously send data to and from all players. Like audio and video streaming, these activities consume excessive network bandwidth and slow down PLNet for other users. They can also increase network costs.

- 3 Do not download large files, such as movie or music files, unless they are education related.**

Downloading large files impacts PLNet performance in a manner similar to streaming audio and video files. In addition, copyright laws prohibit downloading or distributing of many music and video files.

4 Do not act as a file server to Internet users by sharing movies, music files, software or other files from the desktop.

Using a desktop computer as an Internet file server impacts PLNet performance in a manner similar to streaming audio and video files, and may compromise network security. In addition, copyright laws prohibit downloading or distributing of many of these types of files.

In addition, PLNet users should:

5. Limit use of the network for personal reasons to be before 8:00 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m.

Personal use must not impair network performance or jeopardize network integrity. Most PLNet use occurs between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., with the highest use between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. Reasonable, ethical and incidental personal use, such as exchanging brief e-mail message and retrieving information is acceptable but whenever possible should occur either before 8:00 a.m. or after 4:30 p.m.

To ensure the security of the network and protect against viruses:

6. Do not open any e-mail attachments without first scanning for viruses.

Viruses are computer programs usually created with malicious intent and are typically designed to spread and disrupt or seriously damage the target systems. They most often enter the system as attachments to e-mail messages, but can also enter through diskettes; file downloads from the Internet, file sharing programs, or from other services such as electronic bulletin boards. Many users are not aware that viruses can enter PLNet and local school networks when users open unchecked downloaded file attachments.

Anti-virus software may be installed within the school district's e-mail infrastructure. To take advantage of existing anti-virus software, use authorized school district e-mail accounts.

To avoid viruses, immediately save the file, and then scan it for viruses using up-to-date anti-virus software such as McAfee or Semantic. If the anti-virus software does not reject the file then it is most likely safe to open the file.

- 7. Do not obtain files from questionable Internet sources or diskettes without first scanning for viruses.**

See explanation under item #6.

In addition:

- 8. Whenever possible, use a school district-provided e-mail account when exchanging e-mail from a PLNet site with an outside system.**

E-mail accounts not provided by the school district such as consumer services like *Shaw@home*, *telus.net* or *coastnet.com*, or free services like *hotmail.com* or *yahoo.com*) have potential to pass on e-mail attachments containing viruses. Be very careful when you log on to an external e-mail account when using a PLNet-connected computer. Logging on to an external e-mail account bypasses the anti-virus protection provided by both the PLNet Internet gateway and the school district's local area network. If you must use an external e-mail account, any attachments associated with the account must be scanned for viruses.

To avoid viruses, immediately save the file, and then scan if for viruses using up-to-date anti-virus software such as McAfee or Semantic. If the anti-virus software does not reject the file then it is most likely safe to open the file.

EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL USE:

The PLNet is provided as a resource to the British Columbia education system for educational and other work-related purposes. The use of PLNet as a learning tool produces various situations where it may be difficult to determine if use is appropriate. The following examples are illustrative of appropriate use, and should provided guidance to teachers and students:

- Use of Internet radio stations and other streaming audio services are appropriate if the broadcast is of current world events of major significance to the Social Studies curriculum. Note: if the broadcast is available via traditional radio, please use this source.

- Downloading large music files is appropriate if used to demonstrate a musical performance technique in Music courses, or to enhance a student's presentation.
- Use of streaming video or the downloading of large video files is appropriate to demonstrate a technique in an Applied Skills course such as Physical Education or Drafting; or to document an historical event.
- Live webcasts of educational events (e.g. Vancouver Aquarium's Salmon Stream Habitat)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

PLNet Help Desk 1-888-769-5678 or send an e-mail plnetadmin@gov.bc.ca