## 705 - PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS

Using a City telephone during regular work hours for local and/or long-distance calls of a personal nature, except in emergency cases, is discouraged. Personal calls that must be made or received during business hours are permitted if they are held to a minimum and do not interfere with the employee’s work.

The cost of any excessive long-distance personal telephone calls may require payment by the employee. Lengthy personal phone conversations on non-emergency matters may result in disciplinary action.

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## Telephone Courtesy

The telephone is often the only contact citizens have with the City. Telephone courtesy is essential. When employees answer general telephone lines, they should state “City of Columbia” and, if appropriate, the department’s name. Employees who answer a direct line or a transferred call should identify the department’s name if appropriate and state their own name. Employees should be **pleasant**, **courteous**, and **professional** to callers at all times.

## Use of City-Provided Cell Phones

City employees are provided with all telecommunications equipment and services needed by or suitable for them to perform their essential job functions. City employees that require cellular telephones to perform their essential job functions will be enrolled in a "calling plan" considered to be appropriate for their City business needs.

Employees are required to turn their cell phones and personal digital devices off, turn them to silent mode, or ignore them while driving a City vehicle. The use of hands frees devices or pulling off to the side of the road before speaking on the phone is required if electronic devices are not turned off. Under no circumstances should an employee text while operating a City vehicle. As with any policy, management staff is expected to serve as role models for proper compliance with the provisions of this policy and are encouraged to regularly remind employees of their responsibilities in complying with this policy. Supervisors need to refrain from calling or e-mailing employees when they know employees are on the road. Also refer to Policy 603 “Distracted Driving”.

Under Internal Revenue Service regulations, occasional *de minimis* use of City provided telecommunications equipment and services does not give rise to taxable income to employees. Therefore, any City employee assigned access to telecommunications service or equipment that do not exceed their assigned "calling plan" minutes will not be considered to exceed the occasional *de minimis* rule. Any City employee who does not exceed their calling plan minutes in any month shall be deemed to be in compliance with the occasional *de minimis* rule and shall not be required to reimburse the City for any personal calls made during that month.

City cell phones should be password protected in the event that one is lost or stolen. If an employee loses or has a cell phone stolen, they should contact their supervisor

**Use of Personal Cell Phones**

Employee time is valuable, and work hours must be fully used for City business. However, reasonable "use of personal cell phones or telecommunications devices" policies can be imposed at the department level. City departments may limit or prohibit the use of personal cell phones, pagers or other personal wireless devices during on-duty time and/or on City property by issuing departmental policies.