

# Electronic Mail for Public Works

Electronic mail (email) is one of the most useful tools for business. Email allows one to send and receive message from almost anywhere in the world. It is relatively simple and user-friendly and is usually immediate and reliable. Email allows users to avoid chitchat and deal with situations on their own time.

Mail is sent via an email address. The mostly widely used addressing system has the form user@host.domain. An example is john.doe@fhwa.dot.gov. The user, "John Doe," has an account on the host "fhwa" (Federal Highway Administration) at the domain "dot.gov" (within the Department of Transportation, a governmental institution).

With email, messages can be sent to many people simultaneously. The recipients can be separated by thousands of miles and receive the mail at virtually the same time.

## Mailing Lists

A convenient way of corresponding with many others is to join a mailing list. Lists allow people to communicate with a group of people who have similar interests and concerns. They can collaborate on work, and ask for help with problems or assist others. Mailing lists are generally free. PW NET is an example a mailing list.

To initiate a subscription to the mailing list, the user sends a message to the list, known as a

### PW.NET

Want to know what is happening in other towns? Need a place to ask questions of other Public Works Officials? Then, subscribe to PW.NET! It's free. Send an email message to [kathy.desroches@unh.edu](mailto:kathy.desroches@unh.edu)

In the body of the message type:

Add PW.NET your name

For instance:

Add PW.NET John Doe

listserve. Directions to subscribe to PW NET are in the box on this page. (Most listserves follow the same format).

When the list manager receives the subscription request, they will send the user a welcome message. It is good practice to save this message. It usually contains valuable information, such as who to contact if the user is has problems using the list

To use a list, the user writes a message to the listserve address and sends it. The listserve automatically directs the mail messages to all the subscribers.

## Rules for Writing Email Messages

Unwritten rules for using email make it effective and efficient.

Users should write a relevant subject line. Some people receive hundreds of email messages a day and cannot possibly take the time to read every message. The subject line determines if they will look at the message.

Messages should be concise and to the point. The people who receive hundreds of email messages a day, probably won't read long messages. They may delete the message without fully reading it.

One should not reply to an email message by including a complete copy of the original and then saying yes or I agree at the bottom. Include only the relevant text of the original message, commenting where appropriate.

Text written with the caps lock on means, in the email world, the sender is yelling. It may seem like a small point, but people are sensitive.

Users should include the same information at the bottom of the email that would normally be included in a standard letter. For instance, name, title, and company name.

Email makes doing business easier. It's nice to be able to answer mail at your own convenience or to put a quick question out on a listserve.

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