Email Safety:
Avoiding Emotional Injury in the Workplace

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Words Can Hurt: Why Email Is Particularly Hazardous

- People can’t see your face or hear your voice to infer tone.
Words Can Hurt: Why Email is Particularly Hazardous

• You can’t see their reaction to adjust your message to your audience once you begin delivering it.
Words Can Hurt: Why Email is Particularly Hazardous

• A bad mood is like a self-fulfilling prophecy; sometimes people are just looking for another reason to be upset.
General Email Safety Tips

- Avoid using email for confidential and/or sensitive information.
General Email Safety Tips

• Use complete sentences and proofread carefully.
General Email Safety Tips

• Be brief. (No more than 1-3 short paragraphs.)
General Email Safety Tips

• Treat email like any other formal writing:
  ▪ Use a salutation.
  ▪ Use a closing.
  ▪ Use a signature with name, title, and contact information.
Caution: Don’t Slip on the Send Button

• Are you uncertain about whether you have the right recipient(s)?
Caution: Don’t Slip on the Send Button

• Do you have spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors?
Caution: Don’t Slip on the Send Button

• Could your tone be misinterpreted?
Caution: Don’t Slip on the Send Button

• Have you forgotten your attachment or included the wrong attachment?
Top 3 Email Attachment Hazards

1. Attachment was too large to be downloaded.
Top 3 Email Attachment Hazards

2. Attachment format was filtered or unreadable by recipients software (ex: ZIP, DOCX, etc.).
Top 3 Email Attachment Hazards

3. Attachment was not needed; sender could have sent link or path to shared drive.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

• Avoid overuse of high priority.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

• Don’t use read receipts.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

• In replies, don’t include the whole preceding message; just quote the relevant portions.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

- Be considerate about when you CC/BCC up the organizational hierarchy.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

• If you receive mail by mistake, forward it to the correct recipient, CCing sender.
Little Courtesies: Protecting Against Common Email Irritants

- It’s good practice to get the sender’s permission before forwarding a message.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

• When sending to multiple recipients: consider who *really* needs to be CCed. Consider mail merge or BCC to avoid mass replies.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

• For group discussions, consider other methods: listservs, globals, discussion forums, blogs, etc.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

- If you receive mail by mistake, forward it to the correct recipient, CCing sender.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

- To avoid lapses in service, consider giving out a list serv or global instead of a personal email.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

• Before replying to a message with several recipients, decide whether it is best to Reply or Reply All.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

• Before replying to a message, be aware of whether the recipient is a listserv or global instead of an individual.
Avoiding Mass Alarm: Routing Your Email to the Correct Recipients

- Never assume your email is confidential. It could be forwarded or intercepted by anyone.
Fire Safety: How to Avoid Flames in Your Email

• Don’t use all capital letters, a.k.a. FLAMES. (People will think you are SHOUTING.)
Fire Safety: How to Avoid Flames in Your Email

• Call attention to mistakes indirectly. (Instead of “You have a typo on your Webpage”, ask “Did you mean to use ‘its’ instead of ‘it’s’ here?”)
Fire Safety: How to Avoid Flames in Your Email

• Consider using another mode of communication for criticism, grievances, etc.
Fire Safety: How to Avoid Flames in Your Email

• Use humor judiciously; be wary of irony and sarcasm. (A misunderstanding is not a laughing matter.)
Putting Out Fires: How to Respond to An Angry Email

• Assume the best intentions on the part of the sender.

• Don’t respond immediately; cool down first.
Putting Out Fires: How to Respond to An Angry Email

• Admit to mistakes; look into what you don’t know instead of making guesses.
• Place your response in drafts folder.
• Seek advice from colleagues.
Putting Out Fires: How to Respond to An Angry Email

• Review your response for tone, accuracy, etc.

• Consider using draft as notes for a meeting or phone call instead.