

Introduction and Purpose:

This policy allows the University to meet IRS regulations and its fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of the State of Montana by providing guidelines for the use of electronic communications devices (ECD) for University business purposes.

Policy:

It is the policy of the University to allow for the purchase or reimbursement of electronic communication devices and/or services for use by employees to conduct official University business. Electronic communication devices and/or services are defined as cellular phones, personal device assistants (PDA), home internet services, and satellite telephones.

University procurement or reimbursement of such devices and/or services will be authorized ONLY when the job responsibilities require the employee to be accessible at all times. Authorization and approval of such expenditures shall reside with the departmental administrator and applicable Chancellor/Vice Chancellor. Review and renewal of such expenditures must occur annually. Prior to the approval of any request for purchase/reimbursement of electronic devices and/or service payments, the job responsibilities of the individual will be thoroughly reviewed to insure the electronic devices and/or services selected are warranted and will safeguard sensitive University information.

Payment for electronic communication devices and/or services can be made through a taxable allowance to qualified employees or directly by the University. The allowance process serves as the default method for employee procurement of these devices and services. There may be some cases where exceptions to the allowance method may be made in accordance with the attached procedures.

Provisions must be made with the Office of Information Technology to ensure proper safeguarding and disposal of University data on the ECD device.

The implementation details of this policy are described in the associated policy procedures. [Protocol for ECD Approval](#)

Transition

Beginning immediately upon the approval of this policy, the University will no longer purchase any new electronic communications devices or service contracts, except for devices to be assigned to groups; nor, with the same exception, will any existing electronic communications device contracts be renewed or extended. In order to avoid cancellation fees and to allow for an orderly transition, anyone currently using a University-owned electronic communications device, acquired prior to the establishment of this policy, may continue to use that device until the expiration date of the contract in place on the effective date of this policy. Thereafter the user must modify his/her usage to comply with the provisions of this policy. If you would like to continue to use your current number as your personal phone number, please contact Information Technology for instructions on how to do so.

Procedure: Electronic Communication Devices and Services
Date: January 2009
References: Electronic Communication Devices; Information Technology Policies

Definitions:

Electronic Communications Device . An electronic communications device (ECD) is a mobile telephone, email appliance, wireless personal digital assistant, or a device combining two or more of those functions. Mobile telephones are broadly construed here to include devices based on CDMA, TDMA, GSM, and PCS digital technologies and follow-ons, as well as satellite telephones.

Adequate Service . An electronic communications device service is adequate when it is sufficiently fast, sufficiently convenient, and sufficiently secure to allow the user to conduct University business in an efficient manner that safeguards the integrity and security of sensitive University information.

Essential personal calls . These are defined as personal calls of minimal duration and frequency that are essential to allowing the employee to continue working and cannot be made at another time or from a different telephone. Examples of essential personal calls are calls to arrange for unscheduled or immediate care of a dependent or a family emergency, or to alert others of an unexpected delay due to a change in work or travel schedule.

Employee Allowance Procedures

This is the default procedure to be used for electronic communication devices assigned to one employee and including both business and personal use. No further reimbursement for electronic communications device costs is available to employees who receive such an allowance. Employees who are not eligible for an ECD allowance may submit records of their expenses to be reimbursed for infrequent, business-related use of their personal communication devices.

Departmental Purchases Procedures

This is the procedure to be used for those users approved to use electronic communication devices accessible to more than one employee or available only for official business use. MSU-Billings may, in some cases, purchase and own electronic communications devices to be assigned to groups or individuals. This may be done if and only if the personal use of those devices is strictly limited to essential personal calls (see definition above).

Temporary Loan

University-owned electronic communications devices may be loaned to employees for temporary use. When traveling on University business, an employee may keep a University device in his or her possession full time but must return it to University property promptly at the end of the travel period. Personal use of these devices is limited to essential personal calls only.

If you do not fit into these categories or for advice or assistance in determining the appropriate and applicable procedures please contact: **Cellular Manager** **247-5700** Email helpdesk@msubillings.edu

EMPLOYEE ALLOWANCE PROCEDURES

Employee allowance for electronic communication devices (ECD) including internet service:

An employee's supervisor is responsible to determine the need for an employee to have an electronic communication device (including internet service.) An ECD allowance can offset a portion of or all expense of the ECD or service.

1. It is the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to determine the dollar amount of the allowance for ECD. This amount should be based on the cost of service which allows the employee to conduct University business in an efficient manner and should cover the employee's projected business-related expenses only. Generally accepted reimbursement rates are \$15 for low business use, \$25 for moderate business use, \$40 for high business use, and \$45 for data services per month. If amount requested exceeds \$85 per month, an explanation must be attached to the allowance form. In no case shall the amount of reimbursement exceed the cost of service. The allowance shall not exceed \$200/month or \$2,400 annually for all combined services. Late fees and overages are not reimbursable.
2. After reviewing and approving an employee to receive an ECD allowance, the ECD Allowance Request Form must be completed and forwarded to the applicable Chancellor/Vice Chancellor, or designee, for signature. The form must then be forwarded to the Office of Information Technology with all applicable signatures/authorization. IT will forward the final approved forms to Financial Services/Payroll for processing.

ECD Allowance Request Forms for newly qualified employees will go into effect within 30 days of receipt in Financial Services. To renew the allowance, a new ECD Allowance Request Form must be submitted no later than January 31st of each year.

The ECD Allowance Request Form will provide approval to pay out the allowance in equal installments over the year based on the pay cycle in which the employee is normally paid.

This allowance does not constitute an increase to base pay and will not be included in the calculation of percentage increases to base pay due to annual increases, job changes, etc.

3. Under IRS regulations, this allowance is taxable to the employee. The cost of the ECD allowance plus applicable employer/employee paid benefits will be an expense of the authorizing department's budget.
4. The employee must maintain an active ECD service plan as long as the ECD allowance is in place.
5. A copy of the employee's most recent active billing statement must be attached to the ECD Allowance Authorization form.
6. An annual review of the business need for the ECD and associated allowance must be completed by the employee's supervisor. An ECD Allowance Request Form must be submitted no later than January 31st of each year. This form will provide approval to pay out the allowance in equal installments over the year based on the pay cycle in which the employee is normally paid.
7. If the status of a qualified employee changes during the year and the employee should no longer need an allowance for ECD, Financial Services/Payroll must be notified by ECD Allowance Request Form of this change in order to stop the payment of the allowance. Any overpayment of allowance must be repaid by the employee to the University.
8. The telephone number of the ECD will be made available to the university as required by your duties.
9. If Blackberry/PDA services will be requested, individuals must contact Office of Information Technology.
10. Only "direct" costs may be charged to grant and contracts. Therefore, the allowance cannot be charged to grant accounts.
11. Many wireless carriers offer a discount to state employees. Please contact carriers for more information.

Equipment purchase

1. It is the responsibility of the employee to enter into the cellular phone contract, or contract for internet services, under their own name. The purchase of any equipment is also the responsibility of the employee.
2. A department may choose to reimburse for all or part of the equipment purchase. It is the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to determine the dollar amount of the equipment reimbursement for the ECD. In no case should the reimbursement exceed the cost of the equipment. Reimbursement should be limited to one device per the employee's ECD service contract term.

The applicable section of the ECD Allowance Request Form must be completed and submitted to the Office of Information Technology for inclusion in the employee's wages. IT will forward the form to Financial Services/Payroll and this allowance payment will be made to the employee on their next available paycheck.

3. A copy of the receipt for equipment purchases must be attached to the ECD Allowance Authorization Form.

Change to status

1. If the employee changes the ECD service contract, as in modification or termination, then the employee may bear the cost of any fees associated with that change. For example, if the employee terminates employment with Montana State University Billings and no longer wants to keep the ECD service contract, then the cost of that change may be the employees'. The departmental manager will make the determination of who pays for any fees associated with changes.
2. If Montana State University Billings should determine that it is necessary for the employee to terminate or change the ECD service contract, then the University will bear the cost of any fees associated with that change. Reimbursement of such expense will be made to the employee through Accounts Payable. See **Departmental Purchases Procedures**.

**Montana State University Billings
Electronic Communication Device
Employee Allowance Authorization Form**

Employee Name: _____ **Employee ID:** _____

Employee Job Title: _____ **Department** _____

Note: The allowance will be charged to the same indexes that the employee is paid from, and will show as a payroll expense; however, if the employee is paid in whole or in part from a grant, you must specify a non-grant index number to which the allowance will be charged: _____

Allowance Start Date: _____ (Allowance must be reviewed and form resubmitted annually by January 31st each year. Should the plan be cancelled or the business use change, a new form must be submitted promptly.)

Monthly Allowance Amount: _____ (**Attach copy of service contract or statement.** See procedures for suggested amounts/limits.)

One-time allowance for equipment purchases: _____ (**Attach receipt.** Note: The monthly allowance amount covers recurring service plan charges. If a device must be purchased, the department may choose to reimburse the employee for part or all of the device cost through the allowance process.)

CURRENT PLAN features:

Mobile service provider Name: _____ **Monthly Charge:** \$ _____
Device Telephone number: _____ (this number must be made available to University)
Distinguishing service characteristics _____

I have read the Electronic Communication Devices Policy (<http://www.msubillings.edu/staff/cellphone>) and agree with its terms and conditions.

Employee Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

To be completed by Supervisor/Fund Controller:

Supervisory certification of the business purposes for this allowance (mark all that apply):

- This employee is a key staff member needed in the event of an emergency (cabinet, etc.)
- This employee is frequently away from access to traditional land-based phone services.
- This employee is involved in frequent off hours/on-call activity.
- This nature of this employee's work is critical and immediate response is required.
- The related cost is justified when compared with alternative communication choices.
- Other- If not listed above, please state why device is necessary, why it is essential in carrying out job responsibilities and why job responsibilities could not be carried out without it. _____

Approvals:

Department Head or Director _____ **Date:** _____

Chancellor or Vice Chancellor _____ **Date:** _____

CIO/Information Technology _____ **Date:** _____

Payroll/Grants Contracts (if appl): _____ **Date:** _____

DEPARTMENTAL PURCHASES PROCEDURES

Departmental purchase of Electronic Communication Devices (ECD) and/or services is the exception. The departmental administrator in consultation with their supervisor will determine the appropriateness of such departmental expenditures. Justification for departmental purchase must be included on the ECD Request and Authorization Form.

Obtaining Electronic Communication Devices and Services Purchased by the University

1. Departments must follow the state purchasing policy/procedures. Cell phones are currently on term contracts with the state. Employees can check with purchasing for details.
2. Research the available options for electronic communication devices (ECD) and services including state term contracts. Questions about available options should be directed to Office of Information Technology at 247-5700.
3. Once a department decides on the necessary services and/or devices, an ECD Departmental Authorization Form (attached) must be completed by department personnel with authorization from the Dean/Director and applicable Chancellor/Vice Chancellor.
4. Route the form through the Office of Information Technology.
5. If the department is also requesting Blackberry/PDA services through the University you must coordinate with Office of Information Technology.
6. Once services have been established with a vendor, forward a copy of the ECD Departmental Authorization Form to Business Services. If billing questions arise, Business Services will work with the indicated departmental contact.

Departmental Payment for Electronic Communication Devices/Services

1. Payments made directly by the University to vendors can be made using a Banner BPA. University purchasing credit cards may not be used for electronic communication devices or services.
2. Only official business may be conducted on any University purchased electronic communication device or service. It is the responsibility of the departmental manager to ensure reimbursement for any personal use of the ECD. This is to ensure compliance with IRS regulations and state policies. The reimbursement may be a proration of the monthly fees or a predetermined reimbursement rate. Reimbursement must occur within thirty (30) days after receipt of the invoice.
3. Documentation for payments of ECD shall be supported by an original detailed invoice or statement from the service provider. The documents must also include support of management's review, substantiation, detailed use records, and any reimbursement documentation for personal use. The supervisor and employee must sign off on the monthly statement that all calls have been reviewed and are for business purposes only or have been reimbursed. This must be attached to the BPA for payment of the vendor bill.
4. Annually, the departmental administrator must review and renew such expenditures to ensure the electronic devices and/or services are warranted. The review of availabilities of services may warrant a change in departmental ECD. Changes to ECD/services must follow Obtaining Electronic Communication Devices and Services Procedures noted above.

Change to Departmental ECD Services

1. If for any reason the department needs to change, modify or terminate the ECD service contract, the department should work directly with their ECD service provider. The department will bear the cost of any fees associated with that change. Payments made directly by the University to vendors can be made via Banner Invoices.
2. Business Services and the Office of Information Technology also need to be notified in writing of any changes to the ECD contract.

**MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY-BILLINGS
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE
DEPARTMENTAL PURCHASE AUTHORIZATION FORM**

Employee Name: _____

Employee ID: _____

I have read the Policy for Electronic Communication Devices and agree with its terms and conditions. In addition, I agree to follow all employee responsibilities as described in the policy and procedures found at <http://www.msubillings.edu/staff/cellphone>.

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

To be completed by Supervisor or Fund Controller:

Justification for departmental purchase instead of allowance method: _____

Certification of the business purposes for this allowance (mark all that apply):

- This employee is a key staff member needed in the event of an emergency (cabinet, etc.)
- This employee is frequently away from access to traditional land-based phone services.
- This employee is involved in frequent off hours/on-call activity.
- This nature of this employee's work is critical and immediate response is required.
- The related cost is justified when compared with alternative communication choices.
- Other- If not listed above, please state why device is necessary, why it is essential in carrying out job responsibilities and why job responsibilities could not be carried out without it. _____

Supervisor/Fund Controller Signature _____ Date: _____

Approvals:

I authorize that the above named department or individual has a business need for an electronic communication device to perform their job duties. The electronic communication device will only be utilized for legitimate business purposes and any personal use will be properly reimbursed in accordance with University procedures.

Dean/ Director _____ Date: _____

Chancellor/Vice Chancellor _____ Date: _____

CIO _____ Date: _____

Cell phone questions, contact Cellular Manager at 247-5700

For Blackberry Service/PDA, contact Cellular Manager at 247-5700 who can answer questions about services and fees.