

# Voice Mail Policy

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*Effective Date: Adopted 4/17/98*

**§-I. PURPOSE** This policy is intended to establish guidelines for the use of voice mail including when and how it is to be used. The voice mail system is a customer service tool to enable the public to communicate with county agencies and receive immediate assistance in the event the person being called is not readily available. The system is to be used to promote prompt, courteous customer service and is intended for business use only.

**§-II. SCOPE** All County Departments

**§-III. POLICY**

1. All telephone numbers published to the public must be answered "live" during business hours by the employee or, if the employee is not available, by an assigned attendant. Department managers are responsible for ensuring these numbers will be staffed continuously during the published working hours, generally 8:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. The attendants at these stations should be knowledgeable of the operation and its staff members and be capable of referring all calls to the appropriate person. They must be trained in the use of the voice mail system so callers can be allowed to leave messages if the staff person is not available, or be forwarded to another staff member who can assist them.

2. County telephone numbers published to the public will have a recorded message developed for after-hours calls to include a thank you for calling, giving the office name and hours, and what number, if one exists, to call for an emergency.

3. Each department will establish a telephone coverage path for all employees. If the staff person's extension rolls to voice mail when the staff member is unavailable, the operator option given must provide a live operator at all times during working hours. The operator's extension should be a number which will not change frequently. If the staff member's extension rolls directly to a live attendant's extension, the attendant's station must be staffed at all times during working hours. In either instance, it is the Department's responsibility to ensure that immediate assistance from a person is available if desired by the caller.

4. During working hours all calls, including those rolling to voice mail or a live attendant, must be answered within three (3) rings. The maximum number of rings for each call before being answered will be six.

5. Each Department Manager with voice mail capability is responsible for configuring the employees' voice mail coverage path as follows:

A. All telephone numbers published to the public must be answered "live" during business hours by the employee, or if the employee is not available, by an assigned attendant.

B. At the Department Manager's direction, other extensions will be configured so that external calls, when the employee is away from the work station or on the telephone, will either:

1. roll to a designated number which will be staffed at all times, with the live operator providing the caller with the option of leaving a message in the voice mail box (voice mail box message will contain greeting to include name, department, unit or office, date/time, why unavailable, and an operator option); or
2. roll directly to voice mail, with the voice mail greeting offering the option of pressing "0" to reach a live operator.
6. Each employee will be responsible for activating the voice mail feature on his/her telephone for any period of absence from the assigned work station.
7. Employees are responsible for updating messages in voice mail to identify any extended periods for which they may be absent from the work area (training, vacation, sick, special assignment, etc.), identifying the date(s) of absence, expected duration of absence, expected date of return, an interim contact telephone number for assistance. The message must also include the option to dial "0" for the operator.
8. Employees will activate the voice mail feature at close of business to allow voice mail to accept messages after hours.
9. Employees will check their voice mail at least twice daily when at work. Return calls required by messages should be made within eight (8) working hours of receipt.
10. Old messages should be deleted from the system as soon as possible.
11. Departments must take provisions for retrieving voice mail messages when unscheduled absences occur so that messages are always retrieved on a daily basis.
12. Voice mail messages become part of county records and as such are subject to open records requests. Employees should not have an expectation of privacy in connection with voice mail messages and should use the system accordingly. Voice mail messages will automatically be purged from the system's hard drive after a set period of time.
13. All attendants taking public calls are required to receive instructions on the use of the voice mail system.
14. Each department will establish a representative responsible for managing its voice mail system.
15. The Cobb County Customer Service Council will develop a system for periodically monitoring the use of voice mail to ensure that Cobb County's high level of customer service is maintained. The information gathered will be made available to Department Managers to assist in structuring the Department's voice mail in compliance with policy.

**§-III. POLICY EXCEPTION** This policy does not apply to telephone numbers to which automated devices are attached to provide information to citizens directly from computer systems, automated answering pools, or pre-recorded information.

**§-IV. SAMPLE MESSAGES:**

1. No answer, person not on vacation or out sick:

*"Hello, this is John Smith, Purchasing Department, and this is Wednesday, April 15. I will be in training today until approximately 1:00 p.m. If you need immediate assistance, press "0" now. Otherwise, please leave a message after the tone, and I will return your call as soon as possible."*

2. No answer, person out for more than one working day:

*"Hello, this is John Smith, Purchasing Department. I will be out of the office until (specify date). Please press "0" now for assistance. Thank you."*