



**AFM**  
**E-mail**  
**Correspondence**  
**Guidelines**

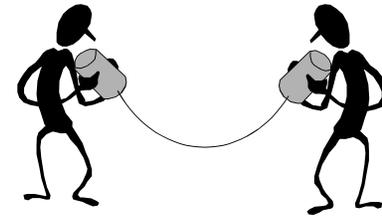
April 2001

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## INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology Division, in cooperation with the area offices, has compiled the following e-mail correspondence guidelines. Our goal is to facilitate effective communication within AFM and with the areas and locations. These guidelines cover public groups, technical issues, and e-mail etiquette.



# USING GROUPS

## Using Groups

### ARS Groups

These groups are for official use only; please exercise care when using them. Indiscriminate distribution of e-mail to a large number of recipients -- especially when sending attachments -- can significantly degrade the performance of an e-mail system. Consequently, we are requiring a higher level of approval before these groups can be used. For AFM and NAL staff, approval is required from a Branch Chief or higher. After receiving approval, please contact the Help Desk for assistance in accessing these groups.



- ARS-All (All ARS employees, including the three groups below)
- ARS-CD-LC-All (Center Directors/Location Coordinators)
- ARS-RL-All (Research Leaders)
- ARS-LAO-All (Area Administrative Officers and Location Administrative Officers)

## All REE Groups

To send e-mail to all employees in the following REE agencies, you must use the appropriate contact.	
<b>All employees in:</b>	<b>In the To: box</b>
ERS	Maxine Cooke MCOOKE@ERS.USDA.GOV (with redistribution instructions)
NASS	Janet Sweat JSWEAT@NASS.USDA.GOV (with redistribution instructions)
But you are able to send e-mail directly to all CSREES and/or NASS employees by using the following guidelines:	
CSREES	EVERYONE@REEUSDA.GOV
NAL	NALUSERS@NAL.USDA.GOV

## Public Groups

Upon configuration of the GroupWise 5 e-mail system, “organizational” public groups will be created for ARS Headquarters staff down to the branch level in AFM. We are reviewing public groups that existed on the GroupWise 4.1 system to determine if they should be recreated in GroupWise 5.5.



Requests for additional public groups must be submitted to the Help Desk where it will go through a review process.

Requests submitted for a public group must contain the following information:

- \* A list of all e-mail addresses to be included in the group
- \* A preferred group name
- \* Point of Contact (POC) for the Group

## **Personal Groups**

Your current personal groups, as well as any rules you have saved, will be transferred when you migrate to GroupWise 5.5.

In GroupWise 5.5, you will have more flexibility with your address book:

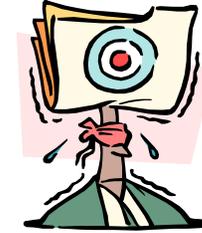
You will be able to share groups that you have created.

Your address book will also contain a list of frequent contacts for faster access to the addresses you use most often.

# **TARGET AUDIENCE**

## Target Audience

Public groups, personal groups, and the other ARS groups are available to get a message directly to your intended audience. Know your target audience and address your e-mail accordingly.



## Areas

When you send informational messages to the areas and locations, use the appropriate public group or create your own personal group. Do not ask the AAO to forward your message, but make sure they receive a copy.

Send action messages requiring “area office coordination” to the area office and ask the AO staff to forward the message to the appropriate staff and to coordinate the response.

## All Staff

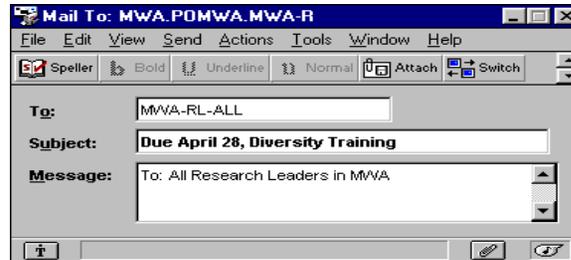
When possible, CC secretaries if sending information to managers that is not sensitive in nature. If you need assistance setting up groups to meet your target audience, contact the Help Desk.

## Target Audience

Whether asking others to forward your message or e-mailing directly, state the target audience in the body of the message. Place **To:** in the body of the message to identify to whom the message was sent.

See example:

Not all e-mail systems identify all of the intended recipients in the “To:” line. Some just show the person who received it. You may have



addressed an e-mail to “MWA-RL-ALL,” but some users may only see their own name and forward the message. As a result, people receive multiple copies from well-intentioned co-workers who read “Forward to all staff.”

# **ACTION ITEMS**

## Action Items



If the required action has a due date, include that date in the Subject line, preferably in **Bold**. Address the appropriate group for action and CC the appropriate AAO. See the subject line example below:

Subject: **Due: April 28, Diversity Training**

When forwarding information on REE policy, indicate this within the Subject line as shown below:

Subject: **REE Policy Information**

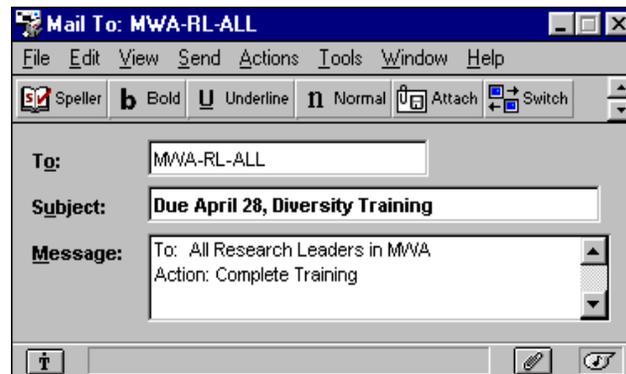
## Action Items

Indicate the required action: Reply, FYI, Comment, Policy Information, etc..., in the body of the message.

The example below incorporates the new addressing guidelines:

To: All Research Leaders in MWA

Action: Complete Training



**READER FRIENDLY  
E-MAIL**

## Reader-Friendly E-mail

### Importing (cutting and pasting)

The way to send information in the most **reader-friendly** format is to import (cut and paste) the text into the body of your e-mail. Heavily formatted documents may not import well. Always review the message to ensure the formatting is acceptable.

While in the e-mail you are writing, you can do one of three options:

1. Click on **File**  
Click on **Retrieve..F11**  
The file manager will appear; select the appropriate directory  
**Double Click** on the appropriate file

The document will appear in the message portion of your e-mail.

2. In most of your applications, you can use your mouse to highlight text, then click **Edit, Copy**, then switch to your outgoing GroupWise message box and click **Edit, Paste**.
3. Use your mouse to highlight text, then hold down the **Ctrl** and **C** keys at the same time, then release. This is the keyboard command to Copy. Switch to your outgoing GroupWise message box and hold down the **Ctrl** and **V** keys, then release. This the keyboard command to Paste.



## **Sending Attachments**

If at all possible, avoid attachments. Send attachments only when the format (graphics, tables, or tabs) or content (letterhead, P&Ps, forms, or policy with signatures) dictate that an attachment is the best way to communicate. When you send an attachment, identify the application and version you used to create the attachment in the body of the message, i.e. WordPerfect 8, Word 2000, etc. This will help avoid problems with different e-mail systems. When sending an attachment to a large audience, if possible, send in multiple formats, (for example, in both WordPerfect and RTF).

Another option is to convert your Word or WordPerfect document to ASCII Text or RTF (Rich Text Format). Because your document will be reformatted, it can affect tables, graphics, or tabs. We suggest this option for documents with minimal formatting.

The following page has instructions on how to convert documents to ASCII Text or RTF. If you have any trouble with this process, please contact the Help Desk.

## **Sending Attachments (con't)**

WordPerfect and Microsoft Word will automatically convert your document for you when you do the following:

While you are in the document you wish to send:

Click on **File**

Click on **Save As**

The file manager will appear.

At the bottom of that screen there is a line that reads:

**Save File as Type, Save as Type or File Type**

It will display whatever application you are currently using.

Click on the ▼ to open the **Save As** options

Scroll up until you locate **ASCII (DOS) Text (\*.\*)**, or **Text** or **RTF** only.

Make sure the file extension changes from either .WPD or .DOC to .TXT

Click **Ok** or **Save**



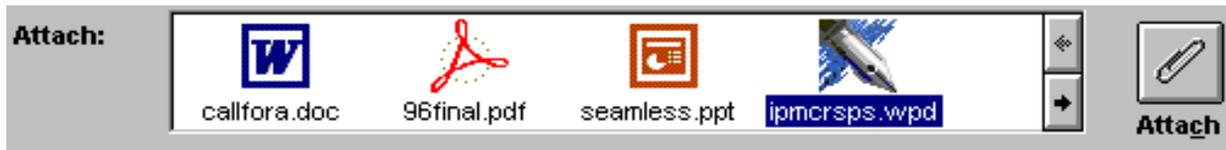
## File Extensions

When you send an attachment, use the application's default file extension after the period in the file name. The correct file extension helps e-mail systems identify the application used to create the attached file.

A file extension is the optional three-letter suffix following the period in a filename. Unless you type something else, most applications will automatically use the correct file extension.

E-mail systems recognize and associate extensions with specific software applications.

If you use the wrong file extension, your recipient may have difficulty reading your attachment. The following page lists common



file extensions and the programs they are associated with.

## File Extensions

Examples of File Extensions	
.WPD	WordPerfect
.XLS	Microsoft Excel
.DOC	Microsoft Word
.WK4	Lotus
.TXT or .ASC	ASCII Text File
.EXE	Executable file
.RTF	Rich Text Format
.ZIP	Zip file
.PPT	PowerPoint
.MDB	Access
.WPF	Informs



ASCII Text and RTF (Rich Text Format) are two formats most e-mail programs can read.

## Forwarding Messages

Avoid forwarding e-mails that have been forwarded to you. Forward from the original message so there are fewer layers. Avoid forwarding e-mail with attachments. Some locations cannot read attachments that are nested multiple layers deep. Take a moment to do one of the following:

Cut and paste the attachment into the body of your message and identify the original sender in your message.

Save the attachment and attach it to a new message and identify the original sender in you message.

Open a new message, then drag and drop the attachment from the attachment box of the first message to the attachment box of the new message.

**POLICIES**

## Policies

### Personal Use of E-mail

Below are excerpts from “REE P&P 253.4 “Use of Information Technology Resources.” For the full version you can access the REE Administrative Issuance page, <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/>

Do not send advertisements or chain letters. There are a lot of hoaxes going around and by forwarding them, you perpetuate misinformation. Unnecessary mass mailing causes congestion and can degrade the e-mail system.

*“Unacceptable Use”*

*“The creation, copying, or transmission of “junk mail” such as chain letters, hoaxes, advertisements, solicitations, or other unauthorized mass mailings.”*

Remember that there is no expectation of privacy with your government e-mail account.

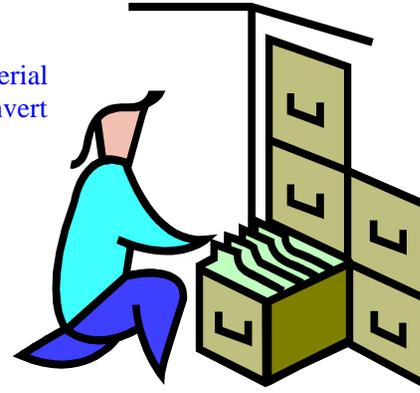
*“Employees do not have a right to, nor should they expect, privacy while using any Government office equipment at any time. To the extent that employees wish their private activities remain private, they should avoid using an agency’s office equipment, such as their computer, the Internet, E-mail, photocopiers, or facsimile machines, for their personal use. By using Government office equipment employees imply their consent to disclosing the contents of any files or information maintained or passed through Government office equipment. Any use of Government communications resources is made with the understanding that such use is generally not secure, is not private, and is not anonymous.”*

## Electronic Records Policy

REE P&P Bulletin 99-002 Electronic Records Preservation Policy states:

“Employees may delete E-mail, word processing documents, and other computer-generated material which meet the definition of “records,” if they first print them in hard copy and either file or convert them to microfiche/film and retain them based on NARA-approved retention periods.”

For more information on records, you can access this full bulletin on the REE Administrative Issuance page, <http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm2/ppweb/>, or contact Steve Pollard, Records Management Officer, at 202-720-3359.



## Manual Archive/Auto Delete

E-mail messages are stored in databases.

When databases grow too large, there is **significant** risk of data corruption and system degradation.

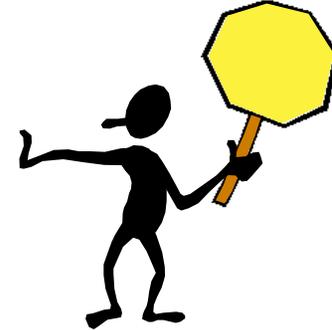
The e-mail system was experiencing corruption last year because of large database sizes.

At that time the Help Desk set up everyone's e-mail to automatically archive messages older than 90 days. This helped stabilize the e-mail system.

It did not address user management of archived e-mail and effective back-up for those archives.

A minimum of 30 GB of additional data storage would be needed each year for archive directories at the current rate of growth. AFM Management agreed that this is not a cost-effective solution.

**With the migration to GW 5.5, e-mail messages more than 60 days old that are not archived will automatically be deleted.** It does not go into the Trash; it is gone, **forever**. E-mail you want to keep must be archived before it is 60 days old. This will not happen immediately upon your migration to GW 5.5, but it will happen very soon.



## Manual Archive/Auto-Expire

If you want to keep e-mail older than 60 days, you must archive it or it will be deleted and it will be unrecoverable.

### To Archive

While a message is in your Mailbox or Sent Items:

Left click your mouse once to highlight the message.

Left click once on Actions at the top of your GroupWise - Mailbox window.

Left click on Archive.

Your message has been archived and it will not be deleted until you open your archive and delete it yourself.

To access an archived message in your Mailbox or Sent Items:

Left click your mouse on File at the top of your GroupWise - Mailbox window.

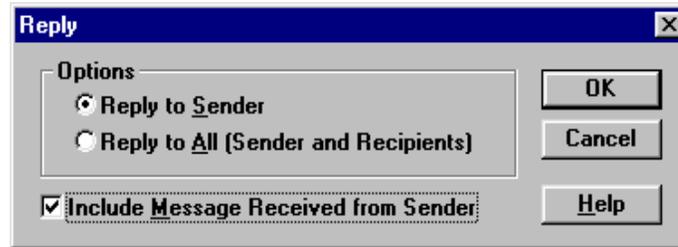
Left click your mouse on Open Archive.



# **E-MAIL ETIQUETTE**

## E-mail Etiquette

When replying to an e-mail, select “Include Message Received from Sender.” This creates a continuous dialog so that both you and the sender will be able to quickly reference what has been written. Do not select “Reply to All (Senders and Recipients)” unless you are **certain** to whom your e-mail is going and that the information is needed.



## Priority Messages

Do not send your messages **Priority** unless you are certain that a priority to you is a priority to your recipient.

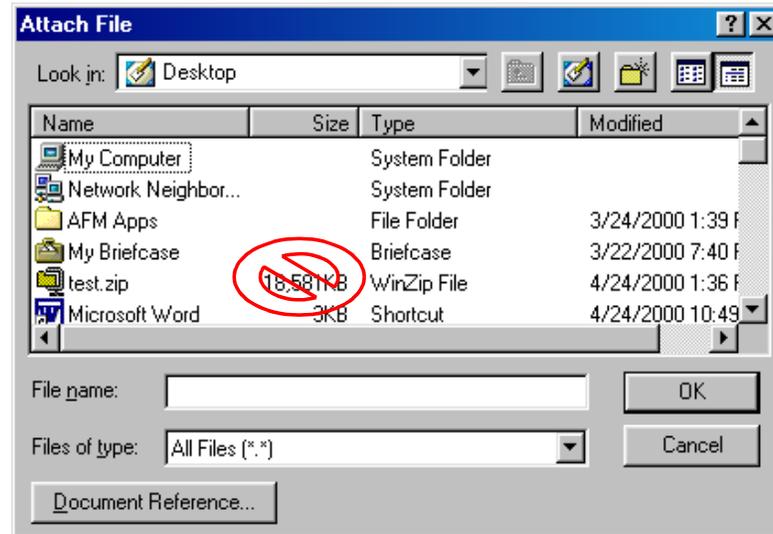


DO NOT SEND E-MAIL IN ALL UPPERCASE; IT IS THE ELECTRONIC EQUIVALENT OF  
SHOUTING AT SOMEONE.  
Only use uppercase for emphasis.



## Message Size Limits

When sending e-mail over the Internet, total message size cannot exceed 10MB.



When you look at the size of your files 10 MB=10,000 KB.

If the number next to the file is too close to or over 10,000 your message may not be delivered.

Remember, total message size includes the message and the attachment.

**Our test.zip file is too big and if you sent it, you would get a message that your e-mail was “Undeliverable, Access Denied.”**

## Help Desk

If you have any difficulty with the tips offered in this booklet or any questions about the guidelines, please contact the ARS Help Desk for assistance:

**DC**      **720-3908**

**GWCC**    **504-1074**

