

# County of Monterey Board Policy Manual

<b>Policy Name</b> Office Environment Guidelines	<b>Policy Number</b> G-160	<b>Page</b> 1 of 3
<b>Policy Category</b> Government and Administration		

## I. Purpose

1. To establish Countywide guidelines for the office environment and during holiday seasons; and recommendations regarding receipt of unsolicited gifts from businesses and/or individuals to Departments and/or employees.

## II. Background

1. During the holidays, many of us choose to decorate our work areas or wear costumes to reflect the themes of the season. This is also a time when many work groups plan holiday gatherings in the workplace as well as outside the workplace. Such activities serve to celebrate the year's accomplishments, improve morale, and provide recognition for a job well done. Most of these activities and expressions of sentiment are welcomed in the County workplace, as long as they are not offensive to other employees or members of the public. The holiday season is also a time when email and internet usage typically increases. Usage of County resources shall be appropriate and employees must refrain from distributing any email received if it does not have a business necessity.
2. Also, during the holidays, businesses and/or individuals may provide unsolicited gifts to Departments and/or employees. These gifts may be in the form of candy, gift baskets, etc.

## III. Policy

It is the policy of the County that:

1. County resources, specifically internal email and intranet, are only to be utilized for business purposes. Use of the internet for incidental personal purposes is allowable consistent with the Information Technology Appropriate Use Policy.
2. Work areas may be decorated with holiday and seasonal items but may not be offensive to other employees or members of the public.
3. Unless preempted by a more specific policy of a department, costumes worn on Halloween, or the work day in closest proximity to Halloween, are permitted in

most circumstances, but should be tasteful and respectful of others. Costumes and displays that are sexually provocative, expressive of violence, or revealing in nature are inappropriate for the workplace. If you are unsure if a display, activity, celebration, or costume is acceptable, please consult with your supervisor.

4. The County's Nondiscrimination Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy (further referred to as the County's Civil Rights policies) apply also to the office environment. Therefore, workplace decorations, celebrations, and costumes should support an organizational culture of inclusion.
  - a. Please see Policy P-160, Nondiscrimination Policy and P-260, Sexual Harassment Policy for further information.
5. Acceptance of gifts by public entities is generally inappropriate and discouraged. It is in the best interests of the County that employees return gifts. A template letter has been created but should be modified accordingly. The State guidelines relative to reporting gifts are provided by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), California Form 700, Statement of Economic Interest (Schedule D – Income – Gifts).

The following documents are located in "Related Policy Documents" in the Policies section of the County of Monterey webpage.

- a. Form 700 – FPPC Instructions (Schedule D) is included in this Policy. (See G-160, Attachment No. 1)
- b. Template letter is included in this Policy (See G-160, Attachment No. 2)
- c. Government Center Office Environment Guidelines (See G-160, Attachment No. 3)

#### **IV. Procedure**

1. Workstations: Employees may display/hang items inside their personal workstations as long as items do not protrude above the top panel of the workstation, or are displayed on top of the overhead cabinets/storage bins. Art, boards, photos, or other items placed on the outside of workstation panels, glass panels, windows, or in any workstation corridor is prohibited. Items displayed should not interfere with the efficient and professional conduct of business and may not violate the County's Civil Rights policies. Any decorations viewed as offensive by reasonable standards are not permitted. Questions regarding this section of the guidelines may be addressed through a supervisor, manager, department head, or with the County's Civil Rights Office at (831) 755-5117.
2. Private Offices: Employees may display/hang items in their private offices as long as they do not violate the County's Civil Rights policies and do not interfere with the efficient and professional conduct of business. Any decorations viewed as offensive by reasonable standards are not permitted. Private offices should follow the general guidelines as stated above in IV, No. 1.
3. Food in Workstations: Food can be stored and sealed in workstations as long as it is out-of-sight and only out while being consumed. Food that is intended for coworkers or visitors should be placed in the closest built-in coffee service area or break area. Treats, such as individually wrapped or sealed candies or chocolates, are permitted in

the immediate work area. Workstations should be neat, professional looking, and presentable to the public at all times.

4. General Surfaces: Tape damages painted surfaces. The use of tape on any wall, door, or painted surface is prohibited.
5. Columns: The use of tape, glue, tacks, and miscellaneous attachments or temporary or permanent markings of any kind on the interior building columns is prohibited either inside or outside the cubicles as the paint on these columns is unique and cannot be repaired.
6. File Cabinets/Bookcases/Bookshelves: Items on top of the file cabinets, bookcases, and bookshelves located in open areas/hallways shall be limited to official County business documents only, with the exception of treats, such as individually wrapped or sealed candies or chocolates.
7. Lobbies and Public Spaces: No items are allowed in the lobbies and public spaces except as authorized by the County Administrative Officer.
8. Posting of Public Notices: Posting of all public meeting notices are to be displayed in the bulletin board cases. If required, in addition to posting in the bulletin board cases, public meeting notices may be posted on the lobby glass doors. Posting notices on any wall surfaces is prohibited.
9. Public Counters: Public counters are to be free of all items, except official signage and County business documents.
10. Art in shared Conference Rooms: Please refer to G-94, County Facility Arts Policy.
11. Breakrooms and Copy/File Rooms: Department Heads shall approve all display/hung items in their breakrooms and copy/file rooms.
12. Department Conference Rooms: Department Heads shall approve all display/hung items in their Department's conference rooms.
13. Birthday, Holiday, and Other Seasonal Displays and Celebrations: These guidelines are not intended to limit or prohibit temporary displays commemorating holidays, holiday seasons, birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions as long as they do not offend other employees, meet departmental approval, and comply with the County's Civil Rights policies. Celebratory events should be optional, secular (non-religious) events that consider the comfort and traditions of the employees involved.
14. Department Heads will administer this policy and ensure guidelines are followed.

**V. Review Date**

1. This Policy will be reviewed for continuance by February 26, 2023

**VI. Board Action**

1. Legistar File Number 18-183, February 27, 2018.