

## District A15 Email Best Practices

Electronic communications (Web sites, e-mail and Social Media) have become an indispensable part of how we communicate, with each other, with our Lions Clubs, and with the Communities we serve. As we use these facilities more and more, we need to be careful that we use them in a way that is both effective and safe. Below are some guidelines for use of e-mail, both personal and our District A-15 e-mail groups, that should help us all use them more effectively and more securely.

The following information was put together from a variety of sources in order to assist you with your understanding of the common elements of an e-mail message and to suggest some best practices that have evolved over time.

1. The "To:" field.

This field must have an entry. Use this field for the e-mail address of a person or a small number of people to whom you wish to send a message and from whom you might expect a response or some action to be taken.

Each address visible here will be shared with all of the other recipients, plus anyone with access to their e-mail, or their computers. Email addresses are private information; as a best practice, you should avoid sharing the addresses of a number of recipients via Email unless it's a small, closed group and you know members have previously been given the list of names and Email addresses. As an aside, it is estimated that more than 10% of all personal computers are being "harvested" for the information found on them.

You may safely place District A-15 Group Email addresses in the "To:" field - there will be no disclosure of any of the actual e-mail addresses. Examples include addresses like "pdga@a15lions.org", or "clubs@a15lions.org", which will send a message to every member of these groups without using the individual Lions' email addresses. Remember that to use the District Gmail group addresses you must be logged in to your A-15 Google mail account.

The use of a Group Email address also drastically reduces the size of the message header. Doing so is considered to be a desirable best practice.

2. The "Cc:" field.

Use this field for the e-mail address of a person or a small number of people to whom you wish to send a message that is in the FYI category, i.e. no response or action is required by these recipients. All of the cautions and suggestions mentioned above under use of the "To:" field also apply.

3. The "Bcc:" field.

Addresses placed in the "Bcc:" field are hidden from all recipients; this ensures the privacy of those names and addresses. When using this field, you should put your own e-mail address in the "To:" field in order to ensure that this field is never empty. Most of the comments above in the description of the "To:" field also apply.

4. **Subject Lines.**  
The Subject Line gives the recipient an idea of what the message is about. It helps recipients prioritize which messages they will deal with first and also to identify potential Spam Mail. It is considered bad form to not include a meaningful, concise subject line.
5. **Message Body.**  
This is the message content. Experience has shown that recipients deal best with brief and to the point messages that deal with one subject only.
6. **Attachments.**  
An attachment is a separate document included with your message. It might be a picture or a policy document that your brief message refers to.

If your message is in the FYI category it may be that not all recipients will wish to read or view a long attachment. Instead of sending large attachments, which the recipient has no choice but to download, consider asking the Technology Chair ([it@a15lions.org](mailto:it@a15lions.org)) to put the attachment on the District web site and then send a link to the document or picture in your message body. Doing so will dramatically reduce Internet traffic and allows the recipient to choose whether or not to take the time and use up possible data quota for which they are paying. This applies especially to those reading their e-mail on a mobile device, or phone.

7. **Formatting Messages.**  
Be careful with formatting using Rich Text and HTML messages. While they look nice, not everybody can receive your fancily formatted emails and they do take longer to transmit. As a courtesy to those who can't receive these types of messages, consider sending plain text emails.
8. **Signature Lines.**  
Your signature line clearly states who you are. It is considered a best practice and a simple courtesy to keep your signature short, limiting it to your name and relevant contact information.

The use of general disclaimers, such as "This Email is confidential and intended for the recipient only. Redistribution is prohibited." is discouraged since the confidentiality of email can never be guaranteed, and you cannot enforce a disclaimer of this kind. If you are that concerned about privacy, you need to consider a more secure means of communication. E-mail is definitely "public".

9. **Replying to Email.**  
When someone sends an Email seeking a response or action on your part, and does not receive a reply, they are left wondering; did the recipients spam filter eat my message, did my message get lost in the Internet ether? By adopting the practice of acknowledging receipt of messages requiring a response within the same working day, you can spare the sender such worry.

“Reply” results in only the sender receiving your acknowledgement, which is usually what you will want. “Reply All” results in everyone in the “To:” and “Cc:” lists receiving your reply, which may well be unnecessary and perhaps even undesirable.

When you reply to an email, including some of or the entire original message in your reply, will result in a longer reply however the recipient will understand the context of your reply much more easily. Once again, courtesy and best practices suggest that you only leave enough to be helpful.

Be aware of the consequences of replying to spam or suspected spam. This includes making use of an Unsubscribe function or link often included in many such messages. By doing so you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Experience has shown that this will most often generate even more spam. It's usually better to just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically.

It's worth noting that the District A-15 Google Email system does a very good job of filtering much of this type of e-mail before it reaches you

10. E-mail security

Consider very carefully before clicking on a link in an e-mail. ONLY click a link in an e-mail from a trusted source, and where the link appears to lead to a trusted site. Links in e-mails are one of the primary ways computer malware is distributed. You don't want key-stroke loggers and Trojan programs installed on your personal computer.