

Kevin's Tech Talk

Edition 2
July 26, 2009

Hello, Western-Pacific NATCA, and welcome to my second edition of Tech Talk. In this edition I would like to talk about e-mail and "netiquette." By now if you don't have at least one e-mail account then you have missed the technology boat and you are probably not one that would be reading this anyway! E-mail has become an integral part of our daily lives. Most of us don't even remember what it was like not having e-mail. I have five e-mail accounts and each one has a very specific purpose. I want to talk a bit about the history of e-mail and NATCA's e-mail services and how to set them up. General e-mail "dos and don'ts" and finish off with Network Etiquette or "netiquette."

E-mail originated within the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) when they asked leading universities to develop computer network infrastructure components, both hardware and software, for storing and exchanging information. What grew from this collection of projects were the Internet, World Wide Web, and e-mail (among other things).

NATCA has had its own e-mail system for over ten years. Originally the system was hosted by a Member from New York Center named Leo Kramer. He was very gracious to provide e-mail service to any NATCA Member free of charge. About 8 years ago, then-President John Carr issued a directive to the National Communications Committee (now Information Technology Committee) for them to take direct control of NATCA's Information Technology infrastructure. The committee soon after purchased our own servers and then moved them to a data center.

About two years ago, NATCA once again moved its e-mail services to another provider which is where we have them today. The service is fast, flexible and protected from SPAM (bulk unsolicited e-mail) and malicious code (viruses, worms, spyware, etc.). I strongly encourage all NATCA Members to have a NATCA e-mail account to conduct NATCA business. We have recently had problems with electronic election ballots because Members have e-mail accounts with Comcast and not NATCA and the fact that Comcast has been rejecting e-mails sent from NATCA's electronic election ballot provider. We have also had big problems with AOL. These problems would not have existed if the Members had NATCA e-mail accounts! NATCA's list-serves were also being rejected by Comcast and, again, this would not happen with NATCA e-mail accounts. The main reason that these companies reject these emails is because they consider them "spam."

It is very easy to get yourself a NATCA e-mail account. Just go to <http://www.natca.org> and look in the green area to the right side of the page, just below the blue “Go” button is a link titled “Want Access?” Click that link and it will take you to the sign-up page. You will need your Membership number. If you don’t have it you can get it from Mickela at the NWP Office at (760) 208-1601. If you are not from the NWP please call your regional office. This process will create an account for you to access most NATCA Members Only websites as well as the NATCA Bulletin Board System (BBS). Then log on to the Members Only website at <http://www.natca.org> and click on “Members Center.” On the right-hand side of the page you will see “Member Utilities.” One of these links is “Request Email Account”. Once you have done this, you can then use a web browser to access your e-mail by going to <http://webmail.natca.net> or you can set up your favorite e-mail program, such as Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, Windows Vista Mail or any other such as Eudora to access your NATCA e-mail account. The general account settings that your program will ask for are:

- Account type – you can use POP3 or IMAP (I usually stick to POP3)
- Incoming mail server – pop.emailsrvr.com
- Outgoing mail server (SMTP) – smtp.emailsrvr.com
- User name – full e-mail address (you MUST include the @natca.net)
- Password – self explanatory (you can check the “Remember Password” button unless you want to enter your password each time you receive mail)
- Then find your Outgoing Server details page (under “More Settings” with Outlook) and make sure to check the button that says “My Outgoing Server Requires Authentication” or something to that effect. Outgoing servers are set up to require that before a user can send mail in order to prevent spammers from using the server.
- This next part is for mostly cable modem users only so if you test the above settings and they work then you are OK. If not, one more step is required. Find your advanced settings and look for the “Server Port Numbers” selections. Change the “Outgoing Server (SMTP)” port from 25 to 8025. This will eliminate the need to ever use your cable company’s Outgoing mail server. Some cable modem providers block Port 25 to prevent people from putting mail servers on their network and to force their subscribers to use their e-mail services – YOU DO NOT HAVE TO USE YOUR INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER’S (Earthlink, AOL, Comcast, Cox, etc.) MAIL SERVICES!

If you have any questions or encounter difficulties with your NATCA e-mail account feel free to call me and I will help you. My cell number is (310) 696-1166.

Let's talk about e-mail dos and don'ts. One of the most annoying (and potentially damaging) things that people do with their e-mail is to forward a "chain" e-mail to all of their friends. These messages are frequently intercepted by Internet marketers and then, guess what, you start getting e-mails with offers of everything from porn to "making money" to who-knows-what. The proper way to send an e-mail to many people at one time is to send the message to yourself as the "To:" recipient and then insert all of the addresses that you want to send it to in the "Bcc:" (blind carbon copy) field of recipients. By doing this, your friends' e-mail addresses will not be visible even to themselves in the recipient list which is in the first part of the message called the header. So don't be a "mass forwarder" of e-mail messages unless you do it right!

You should definitely use virus protection for your e-mail. In my first edition I talked about using malicious code (virus) protection on your PC to keep it healthy. Most of these applications include e-mail protection options. Read the documentation with your protection product and find out how to protect your e-mail.

Don't be the one that received an e-mail from someone that you don't know and double-clicked an attachment to see what it is! This is one of the ways that viruses are spread!

Let's talk a little about "Netiquette". One thing that seasoned users know is that when you use "CAPS LOCK" the receivers of your message think you are YELLING! All caps should only be used for that purpose. Another thing to keep in mind is that sarcasm or dry humor does not transmit well in written form unless the writer takes great care to "paint a picture" of the idea that they are trying to convey with their words. So please be cautious when that is what you intend.

Kevin Sherwood
Communications and Technology Lead
Western-Pacific NATCA