

8/23/99

DATE	SIGNATURE	DIV'N
8/3		o/c
4-8-99		CLB

Closeout of Case Number 199060024

This matter arose as a result of an email dated June 9, 1999 from a NSF employee that was posted to the NSF Announce bulletin board (Announce). An anonymous complainant wrote a note on the email and addressed the inquiry to our office. A summary of the written message was that the people in this division might need more to do if they have enough time at their job "to conduct personal affairs."

The substance of the email relates to a high school reunion and requests that the reader complete an attached form if interested in becoming a donating patron to sponsor the reunion event and souvenir book. The OIG review focused on whether or not Announce is being used by NSF employees to conduct business or commercial affairs unrelated to NSF Official Business.

Announce postings over the past month indicate that in addition to work-related items of interest, that there are significant numbers of postings that relate to commercially available items, however, most of these are single incidents where an employee is selling a particular item or NSFEA-sponsored or other charity-type sponsored events or sales.

The DIS Management and Planning Analyst furnished documents and information regarding DIS policy related and monitoring Announce. NSF Bulletin No. 98-13 addresses "Personal Use of NSF's Technology and Communication Resources." The NSF policy stated in the memo is that basic access to the internet does not result in increased costs to NSF so NSF employees may make use of the internet and email for matters that are not official business provided: 1) the site doesn't identify an additional charge for services, 2) the use is not offensive to co-workers or the public (examples listed), and 3) the use is not for illegal activities (gambling).

DIS officials described monitoring the Announce bulleting board on a regular basis and removing items that are inappropriate or clearly for commercial purposes not related to NSF or NSF-sponsored activities. When an inappropriate message is removed from Announce, DIS sends the policy statement and a caution to the employee and to that employee's supervisor. DIS posts an annual notice, which was rewritten and published on July 27, 1999 that advises employees about the acceptable uses of the Announce Bulletin Board.

The email in question does appear to be a one-time request for support of a fundraising effort. Messages similar to this are routinely posted on the board and are allowable. It appears that appropriate action is taken against employees in response to inappropriate postings. The policy and procedures in place to address use of the Announce bulletin board appear adequate. We have concluded that there does not appear to be a need for further investigation or corrective action of any kind.