Purpose:

To prevent distractions in the workplace and help ensure the safety of all personnel and the patients we serve, and to ensure the maximum degree of privacy and protection of all patient and business information consistent with the law and general principles of confidentiality.

Policy:

Cellular phone use and use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) while on duty shall be limited to necessary work related calls made on work-issued phones. Use of personal cell phones and PDAs are permitted during limited times when work responsibilities are not being performed or when they are being used for operational purposes, such as calling report to the hospital or researching a protocol, etc.

Digital imaging devices, including those that are part of a personal cellular phone (e.g. camera phone) may not be used while on duty except with permission of senior command staff. When digital or photographic images needed for work-related purposes, staff should utilize the City of West Des Moines provided imaging equipment and all such image files are considered the property of the City of West Des Moines.

West Des Moines Emergency Medical Services takes patient privacy and the protection of confidential information very seriously. West Des Moines EMS also recognizes the value of appropriate photographs, video and other images.
Any violation of this policy will result in additional education corrective measures and, where indicated, disciplinary action.

Procedure:

I. Personal Cellular Telephones and Digital Assistants (PDAs)

   a. Personal cellular telephones are permitted to be carried while on duty, but must be placed on silent mode, and allow voice mail to answer the call. Messages may be checked and the phone may be answered during "down time" when not actively involved in an EMS call or performing work duties.

   b. Personal cellular phones may be used for personal purposes, when the use does not interfere with work activities, and should never be the cause for delay in responding to a patient or beginning any assignment.

   c. While attending to a patient or while operating a city vehicle, personnel shall not, respond to (or make) a personal cellular telephone call, send or review text messages, or check or send electronic mail on PDAs.

   d. Personnel are prohibited from using personal cellular telephones or PDAs between the dispatch of a call and the time that call is cleared, unless it is being used for operational purposes. This is to prevent any distractions while engaged in patient care, and to avoid any possible interference with equipment that may occur based on the cellular activity.

II. West Des Moines EMS Issued Cellular Telephones

   a. West Des Moines EMS issued cellular phones or PDAs shall be used for operational purposes including, but not limited to, making contact with another ambulance, command staff, Westcom, medical control, or a receiving hospital.

   b. Personnel will not utilize a West Des Moines EMS cellular phone, including direct connect feature or PDA while driving a city vehicle when it is in motion except under very limited circumstances (such as when the vehicle is staffed with only a driver). If cellular or direct connect communication is necessary for work related communications, personnel in the passenger’s seat or other on board personnel should handle the telephone whenever possible. Personnel working aboard one-person vehicles will minimize the use of city issued cellular phones while operating City of West Des Moines vehicles.

III. Mobile Data Computers (MDCs)
a. Personnel driving city vehicles when they are in motion should be discouraged from using the mobile data computers located in city vehicles. When the vehicle is not in motion is when the device should be utilized by the operator of the city vehicle. The MDCs should be utilized by personnel in the passenger’s seat or other on board personnel when possible when the vehicle is in motion.

IV. Digital Imaging Devices (Digital Cameras, Video, Photography)

a. In the interest of protecting employee documents, patient confidentiality, and to prevent the capture of inappropriate data, under no circumstances shall any personnel be permitted to carry personal electronic devices, including digital cameras, video cameras or personal computers while with a patient or on a call or engaged in any work activities.

b. Permission should be sought from command staff before a personal imaging device is used during “down time” or when not on a call. Common sense should be used when using personal imaging devices while on duty and when not on an active incident.

c. Any images that are taken with personal imaging devices that involve identity of the City of West Des Moines in that image may not be distributed in any manner, including posting on publicly or privately accessible web sites or other Internet locations (such as Myspace.com, Facepage.com, etc.), without the express permission of the City of West Des Moines.

d. Any images, whether taken with West Des Moines EMS or personal imaging devices, may only be added to the City of West Des Moines web site by authorized staff. All such images (including those taken with a personal imaging device) then become the property of the City of West Des Moines upon posting.

e. Images taken with West Des Moines EMS issued imaging equipment may not be downloaded or transferred to any other device (including personal imaging devices or flash drives or data storage devices) without the express permission of senior command staff.

f. Should an Emergency Care Provider wish to obtain copies or photographic image files for use in an educational or other approved manner, permission must be obtained from a member of the senior command staff and all photos must be depersonalized.