



# Telephone Usage

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## POLICY STATEMENT

Cornell University provides telephone service for individuals undertaking mission-related activities. The university recognizes the need for personal telephone use, but expects individuals to pay directly for personal long-distance telephone calls.

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## REASON FOR POLICY

Telephone usage should be based upon cost-effective practices that are applied consistently and comply with government rules and regulations.

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## ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

- Endowed Ithaca and Contract Colleges of the University (excluding the Joan and Sanford I. Weill Medical College)

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## WHO SHOULD READ THIS POLICY

- All members of the Cornell University community

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## WEBSITE ADDRESS FOR THIS POLICY

[www.dfa.cornell.edu/policy/policies/telephone-usage](http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/policy/policies/telephone-usage)

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### RELATED DOCUMENTS

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University Documents	Other Documents
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[University Policy 3.2, Travel Expenses](#)

[University Policy 3.14, Business Expenses](#)

[University Policy 3.6, Financial Irregularities](#)

[University Policy 3.24, Mobile Communication Devices](#)

[University Policy 6.6.13, Flexibility in the Workplace](#)

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New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, Article 33,  
Section 1225-c: Use of Mobile Telephones

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### CONTACTS

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Direct any general questions about University Policy 3.19, Telephone Usage, to your college or unit's administrative office or telecommunications coordinator. If you have questions about specific issues, call the following offices:

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Web/Email Address
Billing	Cornell Information Technologies	(607) 255-5500	
Policy Clarification	University Controller	(607) 255-6240	<a href="mailto:controller@cornell.edu">controller@cornell.edu</a>
Tax	University Tax Office	(607) 255-9465	<a href="https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/tax">https://www.dfa.cornell.edu/tax</a> <a href="mailto:tax@cornell.edu">tax@cornell.edu</a>

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### DEFINITIONS

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These definitions apply to these terms as they are used in this policy.

<b>Business Call</b>	A call that fosters or supports the ongoing missions of the university.
<b>Personal Call</b>	A call that does not qualify as a business call.
<b>Local Call</b>	A toll call for which there is no separately stated charge on the university telephone bill issued by Cornell Information Technologies.
<b>Long-distance Call</b>	A toll call that does not qualify as a local call.
<b>University Telephone</b>	A telephone paid for by the university, whether on or off campus, purchased to foster or support the ongoing missions of the university.

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### PROCEDURES

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#### **Introduction**

The university understands that individuals occasionally need to make telephone calls from their university work telephones to meet their personal needs and responsibilities.

◆ **Note:** Although the university will generally not require reimbursement for personal calls made when prompt action is necessary due to a personal situation (see the “*Exceptional Situations*” segment of this document), unit management is responsible for addressing patterns of personal use that would create university exposure under tax law and other governmental regulations, as well as inequitable practices.

#### **Long-distance Calls**

The university is committed to doing business in a cost-effective manner. Because the administrative costs associated with reimbursement for long-distance calls are substantial, individuals are expected to pay directly (e.g., through the use of prepaid calling cards, credit cards, operator-assistance, etc.) for all personal long-distance calls made on university telephones (see the “*Exceptional Situations*” segment of this document for additional information).

#### **Local Calls**

No direct payment for personal local telephone calls is required. The fixed monthly fee covers all local calls.

#### **Cellular Telephones**

For information about cellular phone usage, see University Policy 3.24, Mobile Communication Devices.

#### **Tax and Other Implications**

Cornell provides telephone lines and cellular phones for the transaction of Cornell business. In the university’s telephone billing system, each telephone line is identified to a specific general ledger account in which the charges are automatically recorded monthly. In order to avoid inappropriate tax exemptions and/or inappropriate charges to the federal government, Cornell must identify those expenses that are not mission-related.

#### **Exceptional Situations**

In certain instances, even though a method of direct payment of telephone charges is not available, a Cornell faculty or staff member may need to take prompt action due to a personal situation. In such situations, the university expects staff and faculty to use prudent judgment in determining whether the use of a university telephone is required. Unit management may wish to purchase a prepaid calling card, for use by individuals in exceptional

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### **PROCEDURES, CONTINUED**

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situations.

If such a situation arises and the individual does not have other means to charge the telephone call, the following procedures apply:

1. Obtain the unit's prepaid calling card if your unit has one for such situations.
2. If a unit card is not available, use Cornell lines directly. Notify your unit administrator of the personal call when it is made, including the telephone number, so that he or she may identify it on the monthly bill.

Although Cornell will generally not require reimbursement for calls made in these exceptional situations, units are responsible for addressing patterns of personal use that would create university exposure under tax law and other governmental regulations, as well as inequitable practices.

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### RESPONSIBILITIES

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The major responsibilities each party has in connection with the University Policy 3.19, Telephone Usage, are as follows:

<b>Cornell Information Technologies</b>	Permit individuals to review all charges on his or her university telephone line.  Meet the needs for compliance with external regulations and university policies.
<b>Individual</b>	Use a direct-payment method for personal long-distance telephone calls from work (prepaid calling card, credit card, etc.). If a direct-payment method is not available, (see the <i>“Exceptional Situations”</i> segment of this document), notify your unit administrator of the personal call when it is made, including the telephone number, so that he or she may identify it on the monthly bill.
<b>Unit</b>	Emphasize that direct payment is required, by calling card, debit card, credit card, or operator assistance, of charges from personal long-distance telephone calls made on university lines.  Evaluate business needs for a cellular telephone and purchase a calling plan commensurate with those needs.  Implement review procedures to identify patterns of abuse in which the university is paying for an individual’s personal use of a university telephone.  Address patterns of abuse of this policy with the individual, and, if necessary, the unit’s local human resource representative and/or the University Tax Office to end the pattern and reduce exposure for the university under various regulations.  Consider purchasing a unit prepaid calling card for use by individuals in exceptional situations (see the <i>“Exceptional Situations”</i> segment of this document). ♦ <b>Caution:</b> A prepaid calling card purchased by a unit for emergency situations must be charged to a federal unallowable object code.

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