

Spying in the Workplace

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The national debate over President Bush's secret wiretap program raises other privacy issues. What implications does this have for employer monitoring of employees in the workplace? Many citizens will want to examine the employer's authority under the law to spy on workers. To motivate employee compliance, companies increasingly are putting teeth in their technology policies. Workers have been fired for misuse of the internet. Others have been fired for email misuse. Still others have been fired for misusing office telephones.

Technological advances, such as video cameras, GPS vehicle monitoring systems, and even drug testing have provided employers with superior tools for investigating and gathering evidence of employee misconduct in the workplace. Various federal and state laws limit the extent to which employers may use such technology. These limitations multiply exponentially for employers who have a unionized work force. Therefore, employers need to act cautiously when conducting investigations into employee misconduct, especially in a unionized workplace.

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