

Of all the workplace issues, privacy rights in the workplace is one of the least easily resolved. In most cases, legislators do their best to really fully explore an issue and come up with clear, decisive rules to govern it. With the right to privacy, however, things have changed so rapidly that the law has not caught up. The real problem is that Congress doesn't understand electronic privacy very well. The Internet, as a matter of fact, is something that is very baffling to many of our legislators. Deciding on whether e-mails should be private, what laws should govern electronic wiretapping, surveillance, and other means of spying, is something that the government has never fully done.

This doesn't mean that there aren't any laws governing workplace privacy. Although there is a large gray area, there are many things that clearly violate privacy rights in the workplace. For example, running cameras without the knowledge of the employees is out of the question in many areas. Anything that basically constitute out and out spying is nearly always a violation of workplace privacy rights.

This doesn't mean that privacy laws are always consistent on the point. For example, the verdict is still out on e-mail privacy. Should your boss be able to check up on your e-mail to make sure that you aren't doing things that are not work related? No one really knows, and it seems like it might be a few more years before any clear decision is made. The way it looks now, however, it appears that bosses are allowed to make sure that you aren't doing things not related to work, but aren't allowed to spy on personal communications.

Privacy rights in the workplace also vary greatly from area to area. In America, we have some great local autonomy, but all of this autonomy comes at a price. With the combination of state, federal, and local laws, it is very difficult to know all of your legal obligations and protections. This is true with regard to privacy rights in the workplace more than anything else. As a private citizen, you simply won't be able to keep up with all the given legislation. The only real solution is to talk to an expert. If you think that your privacy rights at work have been violated, you really should get involved with a legal privacy advocate. They can tell you what to do next, and help you to protect your rights.