

Letters and phone conversations are private. It is against the law to open someone's mail without permission or to **secretly listen in on** someone's **telephone exchange**. **Furthermore**, the same **privacy** protections are given to people who use e-mail. For instance, without a **warrant** it is illegal for the police to read the messages that a person has received or sent on a computer. Nevertheless, in several cases employees have complained about **invasion of privacy on the part of** co-workers or their employer. The law is now completely clear on this issue: First of all, each person has a secret **password** for his or her e-mail, but the company also keeps a complete list of these words. Second, an employer can say, "The Company owns everything you have written during work time because you are using our computer system." Therefore, as things **stand** right now, it is probably a good idea for computer workers to be **grateful** about the messages they send; an e-mail system may not be the best place for personal thoughts or secret letters.

Electronic **surveillance**, i.e., a **close** watch over someone, is the cause of wide disagreement — depending on the purpose of the surveillance. High-tech surveillance systems can be very useful in solving crime cases, in finding missing children, in looking for accident victims, and so on. However, **detection** devices such as tiny microphones, **laser sensors**, video cameras, etc., also make electronic surveillance possible in the workplace. In one case, a receptionist with a perfect fourteen-year employment **record** lost her job because of information collected by the company's computer system. The new monitoring system, which checked on workers' speed and performance, recorded that she was spending about nine minutes "too long" with each visitor or caller. The receptionist, who said she was helping company sales by being friendly to customers, **sued** her employer in a **court** of law. She complained that electronic surveillance at work not only causes unnecessary stress but also **invades** people's privacy.

Since 1990, there have been hundreds of reports of **mysterious** electronic **interference** with the communication systems of airplanes. Because important flight information—about directions, plane temperature, wind speed, etc.—has disappeared from pilots' computer screens, they have lost their way. **Technicians** have not found certain answers to these mysteries, but some people **suspect** that the cause may be passengers' use of **portable** computers, electronic games, CD players, etc., inside the plane. Modern airplanes have so many sensors, chips, and wires that they are like "computers with wings"; electromagnetic radiation from entertainment equipment may send confusing signals to airplane **antennas**.

Through **biotechnology**, scientists can create new foods in the laboratory. For example, they can change a tomato **genetically** so the fruit can stay on the plant longer, have more taste, and not get soft quickly. They can put a **gene** from a vegetable plant into a fruit, or even combine some animal genes with plant genes. But are these new foods safe? And what should the creators and growers have to tell the government, supermarkets, and consumers? Producers claim that genetically **engineered** products are not much different from traditionally grown foods; nevertheless, some people want to know exactly how scientists changed the DNA material, how many copies of a new gene are in the food, and what problems might **come up**. For example, will new DNA structures genetically **strengthen** the bacteria that cause disease?

Secretly (adv.) = in a way that involves doing sth without telling other people

Listen in (on sth) (v.) = secretly listen to what sb says; eavesdrop

Telephone exchange (n.) = a place with equipment that connects one telephone line to another

Furthermore (adv.) = (fml) in addition; moreover

Privacy (n.) = the freedom to do things without other people watching you or knowing what you are doing

Warrant (n.) = a document that gives sb official permission to do sth

Invasion of privacy (exp.) = an occasion when sb finds out or uses information about your private life, esp. illegally

On the part of sb (exp.) =

Password (n.) = the numbers or letters that you have to put into a computer in order to be able to use the system

Stand (v.) = be in a particular situation or state

Grateful (adj.) = feeling that you want to thank sb because they have given you sth or done sth for you

Surveillance (n.) = the process of carefully watching a person or place that may be involved in a criminal activity

Close (adj.) = careful; thorough; detailed

Detection (n.) = the discovery of sth which is supposed to be hidden

Laser (n.) = a device that makes a very strong beam of controlled light

Sensor (n.) = a piece of equipment that reacts to physical changes such as the amount of heat or light that exist somewhere

Record (n.) = the things that sb has done, which give an idea of what they are like

Sue (v.) = make a legal claim against sb, usu. to get money from them because they have done sth bad to you

Court (n.) = a place where trials take place and legal cases are decided, esp. in front of a judge and a jury; court of law

Invade (v.) = get involved in sb's life without their permission

Mysterious (adj.) = difficult to understand or explain

Interference (n.) = extra noise (because of other signals or bad weather) that prevents you from receiving radio, television, or telephone signals clearly

Technician (n.) = sb whose job involves skilled practical work with scientific equipment

Suspect (v.) = believe that sth is true, esp. sth bad

Portable (adj.) = light or small enough to be easily carried or moved

Antenna (n.) = a wire or metal pole used for receiving or sending radio and television signals

Biotechnology (n.) = the use of living cells and bacteria in industrial and scientific processes

Genetic (adj.) = relating to genes and the study of them

Gene (n.) = a pattern of chemicals within a cell that carries information about the qualities passed on to a living thing from its parent

Engineer (v.) = change the genetic structure of sth

Come up (v.) = happen

Strengthen (v.) = become stronger or make sth stronger