

A 2000 AMA Survey

Workplace Testing

Monitoring & Surveillance

Summary of Key Findings

Telephone Usage
Voice Mail
Computer Usage
Computer Surveillance
Electronic Mail
Video Recording
Discipline and Dismissal
About the Survey



[Click Here for Printable Version](#)

Eric Rolfe Greenberg, *Director of Management Studies*
Carol Canzoneri, *Manager Research Operations*
Annamma Joe, *Research Associate*





Summary of Key Findings

Nearly three-quarters of major U.S. firms (73.5%) record and review employee communications and activities on the job, including their phone calls, e-mail, Internet connections, and computer files. The figure has doubled since 1997, when AMA inaugurated its annual survey, and has increased significantly over the past year..

Additional forms of monitoring and surveillance, such as reviewing phone logs or videotaping for security purposes, bring the overall figure on electronic oversight to 78%, up from the previous year's 67%. On average, 88% of companies engaged in any such practices inform their employees of their policies.

The AMA questionnaire listed these forms of electronic monitoring and surveillance, this year adding "monitoring Internet connections" for the first time:

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Recording & review of telephone conversations	10.4%	11.2%	10.6%	11.5%
Storage & review of voice mail messages	5.3%	5.3%	5.8%	6.8%
Storage & review of computer files	13.7%	19.6%	21.4%	30.8%
Storage & review of e-mail messages	14.9%	20.2%	27.0%	38.1%
Monitoring Internet connections	N/A	N/A	N/A	54.1%
Video recording of employee job performance	15.7%	15.6%	16.1%	14.6%
Total, active monitoring of communications & performance:	35.3%	42.7%	45.1%	
Including Internet monitoring, absent in previous years				73.5%
Excluding Internet monitoring, as in previous years				66.2%
Telephone use (time spent, numbers called)	34.4%	40.2%	38.6%	44.0%
Computer use (time logged on, keystroke counts, etc.)	16.1%	15.9%	15.2%	19.4%
Video surveillance for security purposes	33.7%	32.7%	32.8%	35.3%
Total, all forms of electronic monitoring and/or surveillance:	63.4%	67.1%	67.3%	
Including Internet monitoring, absent in previous years				78.4%
Excluding Internet monitoring, as in previous years				73.4%

Companies that engage in any of the listed practices do so for such reasons as:

- **Performance Review.** Customer service and consumer relations personnel are frequently taped as they field calls, and tapes are reviewed with supervisors to evaluate and improve job performance.
- **Legal Compliance.** In regulated industries, taping telemarketing activities gives both the company and the consumer some degree of legal protection. Also, electronic recording and storage may be considered part of a company's "due diligence" in keeping adequate records and files.
- **Legal Liability.** Employees who are unwittingly exposed to offensive graphic material on colleagues' computer screens may charge a hostile workplace environment.
- **Productivity Measures.** Net-surfing, personal use of office e-mail, and/or dialing up 900 numbers expend time and assets on non-business related activities.



In efforts to control employee misuse or personal use of telecommunications equipment, 55% of respondent firms use "blocking" software to prevent telephone connections to unauthorized or inappropriate phone numbers, and 29% block Internet connections to unauthorized or inappropriate websites.

When AMA's initial findings were released in 1997, the Association issued this advisory to its member companies:

Policies and practices in electronic monitoring and surveillance should be promulgated and posted so that employees are aware that their actions and communications are subject to recording and review.

In each of the nine listed areas, the AMA questionnaire asked:

- Does the organization practice the listed form of monitoring or surveillance on employees?
- Are all employees subject to the listed practice, or only those in selected job categories?
- Is the practice best described as **ongoing** (i.e., constant and uninterrupted); **routine** (regular, but not constant and uninterrupted); **occasional** (in the manner of spot checks); or **specified** (outside of ordinary practice and performed as part of an investigation or evaluation of activities)?
- If such practices are used, are employees informed of the policy, as advised by AMA?

Although organizational size directly correlates to monitoring and surveillance—the larger the company, the more likely it is to practice any listed form of oversight—the more informative variations are by business category; note, for example, the high incidence of monitoring in the financial services sector (banks, brokerages, insurance, and real estate), which tends to be highly regulated. The tables that follow present the data under those headings. This summary table combines practices as in the table on p. 1 above: "active monitoring" includes six selected oversight practices, while "all forms" includes all nine practices listed in the questionnaire:

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs.	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non-Profit
Active monitoring	73.5%	45.1%	72.0%	89.8%	73.6%	72.1%	80.4%	73.7%	62.4%
All forms	78.4%	67.3%	77.5%	92.1%	82.4%	75.5%	81.4%	76.9%	69.3%

In each table below, the percentages given for "employees informed" represents the percentages of those engaged in the *listed practice* that inform employees of their policies; other numbers represent percentages of all respondents, or of respondent firms under the given headings.

Telephone Usage: Time spent and numbers called, but not taping of conversations

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs.	Wholesale And Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non-Profit
Any such practice	44.0%	38.6%	40.3%	66.4%	49.6%	43.2%	48.7%	52.5%	35.8%
All employees	24.7%	19.0%	24.3%	26.0%	21.3%	24.7%	27.1%	39.1%	23.0%
Selected categories	19.4%	19.6%	16.0%	40.4%	28.3%	18.5%	21.6%	13.4%	12.8%
Ongoing	15.4%	13.2%	13.6%	31.2%	15.3%	11.7%	16.3%	21.8%	13.7%
Routine	10.6%	9.9%	8.9%	17.1%	14.9%	8.9%	13.6%	3.8%	10.1%
Occasional	12.3%	10.9%	12.3%	11.2%	11.3%	14.7%	12.3%	22.6%	10.8%
Specified	7.2%	5.8%	7.1%	5.1%	6.2%	11.2%	8.8%	6.7%	5.0%
Employees informed	85.9%	86.0%	81.6%	96.5%	92.3%	85.7%	87.0%	95.9%	83.9%



Telephone Usage: Recording and review of telephone conversations

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	11.5%	10.7%	6.4%	36.9%	13.8%	10.3%	19.7	15.1%	6.9%
All employees	1.0%	0.5%	0.9%	1.7%	0.3%	1.1%	0.7%	7.4%	0.3%
Selected categories	10.6%	10.2%	5.5%	35.2%	13.5%	9.2%	19.0%	7.7%	6.7%
Ongoing	3.6%	3.1%	1.8%	15.2%	3.7%	2.1%	7.3%	3.4%	1.1%
Routine	3.1%	3.0%	1.7%	10.3%	3.3%	3.7%	4.4%	2.8%	3.0%
Occasional	3.8%	2.6%	2.7%	8.3%	6.0%	2.0%	6.5%	7.5%	2.3%
Specified	1.9%	2.8%	1.6%	3.2%	1.2%	2.0%	2.5%	7.0%	0.5%
Employees informed	93.9%	93.5%	94.6%	95.4%	91.9%	100.0%	94.1%	76.4%	95.8%

Voice Mail: Storage and Review of Messages

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	6.8%	5.8%	5.6%	13.5%	5.8%	4.3%	10.1%	8.7%	4.3%
All employees	4.1%	3.5%	3.9%	9.0%	2.6%	3.5%	4.7%	5.6%	2.5%
Selected categories	2.7%	2.3%	1.7%	4.5%	3.2%	0.8%	5.4%	3.2%	3.5%
Ongoing	0.9%	0.6%	0.8%	1.8%	0.3%	0.6%	1.6%	0.0%	0.8%
Routine	1.0%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%	0.0%	0.9%	1.2%	3.8%	1.6%
Occasional	2.3%	1.7%	2.0%	4.5%	2.4%	1.1%	3.6%	1.7%	1.9%
Specified	3.8%	3.4%	3.3%	6.7%	4.3%	3.5%	5.2%	6.0%	2.4%
Employees informed	85.6%	73.8%	83.5%	97.3%	79.3%	82.9%	82.4%	100.0%	85.9%

Computer Usage: Time logged on, keystrokes counted

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	19.5%	15.5%	17.2%	32.0%	17.3%	21.5%	24.6%	21.7%	15.6%
All employees	9.7%	5.5%	9.7%	11.8%	8.0%	9.6%	11.2%	14.3%	7.1%
Selected categories	9.8%	10.0%	7.5%	20.2%	9.2%	11.9%	13.5%	7.4%	8.6%
Ongoing	5.8%	3.5%	4.6%	10.9%	4.7%	7.4%	7.6%	6.6%	5.0%
Routine	4.1%	4.3%	3.1%	6.6%	4.7%	2.4%	6.4%	10.5%	3.6%
Occasional	5.6%	4.4%	5.2%	6.9%	3.9%	8.2%	7.4%	4.6%	4.3%
Specified	4.4%	3.7%	4.6%	6.6%	4.5%	6.5%	2.8%	2.9%	2.6%
Employees informed	87.8%	85.0%	87.0%	91.6%	81.3%	90.0%	86.2%	100.0%	89.3%



[Telephone Usage](#) |
 [Voice Mail](#) |
 [Computer Usage](#) |
 [Computer Surveillance](#)
[Electronic Mail](#) |
 [Video Recording](#) |
 [Discipline and Dismissal](#) |
 [About the Survey](#)

Computer Surveillance: Files stored and reviewed

	2000	1999	Finan. Mfg.	and Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and General Prof. Svcs	Public Svcs	Non- Admin.	Other Profit
Any such practice	30.8%	21.4%	30.5%	41.2%	26.8%	30.1%	34.4%	41.6%	23.1%
All employees	23.4%	14.2%	22.7%	34.0%	20.3%	25.0%	26.2%	30.4%	16.4%
Selected categories	7.4%	7.2%	7.8%	7.2%	6.5%	5.0%	8.2%	11.1%	6.7%
Ongoing	5.5%	3.3%	5.8%	6.0%	4.7%	4.1%	7.2%	8.6%	3.5%
Routine	4.1%	3.0%	4.2%	5.2%	2.7%	4.8%	5.3%	5.9%	2.0%
Occasional	11.2%	6.2%	10.4%	14.0%	10.4%	11.2%	13.9%	15.2%	10.0%
Specified	10.7%	9.8%	10.4%	17.4%	9.4%	11.6%	8.8%	18.2%	9.0%
Employees informed	84.6%	82.7%	83.9%	85.8%	91.0%	86.6%	79.5%	87.6%	87.3%

Computer Surveillance: Internet connections monitored

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	54.1%	n/a	56.1%	71.5%	48.9%	52.5%	54.1%	45.7%	39.2%
All employees	42.2%	n/a	43.0%	57.0%	38.1%	47.1%	40.5%	39.6%	30.9%
Selected categories	11.9%	n/a	13.2%	14.5%	10.8%	5.4%	13.6%	6.1%	8.3%
Ongoing	12.6%	n/a	14.1%	15.5%	10.5%	7.0%	12.6%	13.2%	9.6%
Routine	9.2%	n/a	9.5%	13.3%	10.1%	9.6%	11.1%	5.9%	2.7%
Occasional	19.2%	n/a	19.3%	20.8%	16.8%	23.8%	18.4%	17.4%	16.8%
Specified	11.6%	n/a	10.8%	17.8%	11.7%	14.2%	10.0%	12.0%	9.9%
Employees informed	89.7%	n/a	89.2%	92.1%	90.2%	87.0%	92.2%	93.8%	86.2%

Electronic Mail: Messages stored and reviewed

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	38.1%	27.0%	37.6%	53.7%	33.5%	40.9%	41.4%	41.7%	27.3%
All employees	32.3%	21.7%	31.2%	46.7%	25.6%	38.4%	24.4%	37.2%	24.5%
Selected categories	5.8%	5.3%	6.3%	7.0%	7.9%	2.5%	7.0%	4.5%	2.9%
Ongoing	6.8%	4.3%	7.4%	7.6%	6.9%	5.9%	6.1%	8.6%	4.6%
Routine	4.6%	3.6%	4.5%	5.0%	4.7%	5.7%	5.3%	5.9%	3.0%
Occasional	13.5%	9.4%	13.3%	15.1%	12.7%	11.5%	18.2%	16.0%	10.2%
Specified	13.9%	10.9%	11.9%	25.3%	11.1%	19.8%	14.0%	16.6%	11.8%
Employees informed	89.7%	88.9%	88.9%	91.8%	91.2%	86.9%	89.3%	93.7%	93.0%

Video Recording: Monitoring & reviewing employee performance

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non- Profit
Any such practice	14.6%	16.5%	12.3%	14.9%	16.4%	11.1%	24.7%	22.2%	13.1%
All employees	8.4%	10.1%	7.7%	6.8%	9.6%	7.1%	11.6%	17.2%	7.1%
Selected categories	6.3%	6.4%	4.7%	8.1%	6.8%	4.0%	13.1%	5.0%	6.0%
Ongoing	7.4%	7.3%	5.7%	10.9%	9.0%	8.0%	11.2%	8.5%	6.5%
Routine	3.9%	5.0%	3.9%	2.9%	4.3%	1.9%	6.4%	1.7%	3.0%
Occasional	1.4%	1.9%	1.0%	1.5%	2.4%	0.7%	3.1%	3.1%	0.5%
Specified	1.6%	2.5%	1.9%	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%	2.0%	2.1%	2.5%



Video Surveillance: Countering theft, violence, or sabotage

	2000	1999	Mfg.	Finan. Svcs	Wholesale and Retail	Business and Prof. Svcs	General Svcs	Public Admin.	Other Non-Profit
Any such practice	35.3%	32.9%	34.4%	43.4%	40.9%	22.4%	40.6%	39.3%	32.8%
All employees	22.1%	19.2%	25.0%	19.3%	21.1%	14.8%	23.8%	14.9%	16.2%
Selected categories	13.2%	13.7%	9.4%	24.1%	19.8%	4.6%	16.8%	24.4%	16.6%
Ongoing	21.7%	17.4%	21.8%	29.7%	27.6%	10.7%	24.3%	22.0%	16.4%
Routine	6.0%	5.7%	5.8%	6.2%	5.9%	6.5%	8.7%	6.0%	3.9%
Occasional	2.6%	2.8%	2.6%	2.1%	1.1%	3.1%	1.9%	10.4%	3.4%
Specified	4.5%	6.0%	4.7%	5.1%	3.8%	1.6%	2.7%	7.8%	7.1%

Discipline and Dismissal: Employee access to all forms of telecommunications steadily increases: on average, 64% of employees in surveyed firms have use of e-mail from office locations, and 48% can connect to the Internet. Well over half the respondent firms have disciplined employees for misuse or personal use of office telecommunications equipment, and 28% have dismissed individuals for those reasons:

	Misuse or personal use of:		
	Telephone	e-Mail	Internet
Any disciplinary action	58.5%	44.8%	41.9%
Dismissal	11.3%	16.0%	17.4%
Formal reprimand or warning	22.1%	29.6%	26.1%
Informal reprimand or warning	35.5%	22.3%	19.7%

About This Survey

The annual AMA questionnaire on workplace testing and monitoring was mailed in January 2000 to human resources managers in AMA member and client companies. By March 31, 2,133 usable responses were returned, forming the current database whose margin of error is 2.5%. To give validity to year-to-year comparisons, the 2000 sample was weighted against the respondent bases for the previous three years. The sample accurately mirrors AMA's corporate membership, who together employ one-fourth of the U.S. workforce, but because such companies are largely drawn from the top five percent of U.S. businesses in terms of annual sales and total employees, the sample does not accurately reflect policies in the U.S. economy as a whole, where smaller firms predominate.

Annual Sales	2000	2000	1999	1998	Category	2000	2000	1999	1998
	(Unweighted)	(Weighted)				(Unweighted)	(Weighted)		
Under \$10M	19.4%	9.8%	6.8%	9.6%	Manufacturing	48.9%	50.3%	43.5%	47.4%
\$10M-\$49.9M	25.0%	18.5%	19.6%	18.5%	Financial Services	7.2%	7.5%	2.4%	5.2%
\$50M-\$249M	23.2%	27.8%	30.4%	26.3%	Wholesale/Retail	8.0%	8.5%	5.0%	5.6%
\$250M-\$499M	7.4%	11.9%	11.1%	12.4%	Bus/Prof. Svcs	8.7%	8.3%	4.5%	7.4%
\$500M-\$999M	6.1%	7.8%	7.9%	8.4%	Gen'l Svcs (profit)	12.7%	12.4%	24.3%	18.3%
\$1B or more	14.7%	13.2%	13.0%	13.7%	Public Admin.	1.8%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Not reported	4.2%	11.0%	11.2%	11.1%	Other NonProfit	12.3%	10.9%	17.4%	13.2%
					Unclassified	0.4%	0.3%	1.1%	1.2%

EARLIER ITERATIONS OF THIS SUMMARY ARE SUPERCEDED BY THIS FINAL VERSION