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'BlackBerry blackouts' aim for life/work balance

Randall Palmer



OTTAWA (Reuters) - It may be wishful thinking, but a Canadian government ministry has sent out a directive to its employees urging them to relax and not to use their BlackBerry smartphones at night or on weekends and holidays.

A Research In Motion Blackberry is shown in Toronto in this October 26, 2007 file photo. REUTERS/Mark Blinch

Trying to re-establish a proper balance between work and life, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is starting by trying to cut the chains to what some have called CrackBerries.

The department's deputy minister, Richard Fadden, sent out a memo asking employees to implement a BlackBerry "blackout" between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. and on weekends and holidays.

"Work/life quality is a priority for me and this organization because achieving it benefits us both as individuals and as a department," Fadden wrote.

"When we can 'balance' our work and personal responsibilities, we, as a team, stand to not only serve and perform more effectively, but also to attract and keep employees to help us build a stronger Canada."

BlackBerries, made by Canadian-based Research In Motion, are handheld communication devices that can be used to send e-mails and make phone calls — thus allowing people to bring the office to their homes, vehicles or even the ski slopes.

They have become an essential workplace tool in politics, business and the professions.

Fadden also asked employees not to use BlackBerries during meetings and also not to schedule meetings over lunch.

"I expect that some of you will consider the above a bit artificial. They may be a little, but I believe we have to start somewhere, and since reducing the quantity of work is unlikely to yield short-term results, we are 'attacking' some of the stresses around work," he said.

He said he understood there might be times when implementing all his requests won't be possible, but people should do their best to respect the new rules.

A spokeswoman for the department was unable to say what guidelines would be given for handling emergencies.

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TECHNOLOGY NEWS

APRIL 24, 2018 / 3:51 AM / UPDATED 5 HOURS AGO

Ukrainian energy ministry website hit by ransomware attack

Reuters Staff



KIEV (Reuters) - Hackers took down the website of the Ukrainian energy and coal ministry on Tuesday, posting a message in English demanding a ransom paid in Bitcoin to recover encrypted files.