

Security and Privacy Procedures

Your security and privacy is very important to everyone at the Watson CPA Group. We want to outline the various policies and procedures which are implemented to protect your confidential information.

Building Security

Our office building is locked after hours and our office suites are separately locked. All guests and clients who arrive at our office must check in with one of our administrative assistants. During tax season, it is common to have 25-30 employees throughout our 8,200 square feet of office space including three conference spaces. All employees are continuously aware of the surroundings, and challenge anyone who is not escorted or recognized.

Employee Mandates

We require all employees to be aware of security and privacy, and sign a non-disclosure agreement. All new employees are screened with a background check with GoodHire, and we also conduct credit and financial screening annually for all employees.

Speakerphone

All employees are equipped with cordless headsets to allow them to continue working with two hands while being on hold or speaking with a client. Speakerphone is strongly discouraged for the sake of hands-free efficiency. If speakerphone is used, we will always announce that you are in speakerphone and name the listening participants.

Printers

We have two printer copiers for all sensitive and tax document printing located in the tax admin areas. Printers are routinely monitored by the tax admins, and all employees are required to retrieve printouts immediately after printing. On our Closing Checklist, the last tax admin for the day must file any printouts or shred them.

Shredding

Locked shred depositories are located next to the printer copiers and throughout the office. A bonded shredding company periodically arrives to shred the documents on-site.

File Servers

File servers are locked in a separate room, and are maintained monthly by Amnet (a local IT company). We have a local backup device that takes image carves of all our data once every 15 minutes. Once a day our data is securely uploaded to off-site storage.

Content Control

We implement SonicWall for our firewall device with content monitoring. All inbound internet traffic is compared to allowed content and most of it is disallowed. There is simply too much malware and other undesirable content associated with Facebook, Instagram and other social media outlets and shopping websites.

Security and Privacy Procedures (continued)

Email Washer

All emails sent to Watson CPA Group go through a mail washer program to compare the sender to known spammers and authors of malware and viruses. The mail washer also denies certain file types for attachments. As a result, all ZIP and EXE files are excluded. Zipping or compressing large files is not necessary since our client portal can handle files of all sizes.

Emailed Tax Returns

The only time we send an attachment to you is through our tax software. We will send your tax returns as PDFs, however they are password protected and all social security numbers are masked with asterisks. Interestingly dates of birth are not printed on any tax forms. If you do not want tax returns emailed to you, please let us know.

Email Etiquette

Our employee handbook has very specific email policies and procedures including the ones above. We will never send personal information such as social security numbers, dates of birth, or passwords through email. The only exception is the initial password we set for your Client Portal which you'll be forced to change after your first login.

Client Portal

We use ShareFile by Citrix to securely allow you to upload files to us, and for us to upload files to you. They use 256-bit encryption and market themselves to firms specifically in the financial and accounting industries. Your Client Portal acts like cloud storage with one exception- all files are synchronized with our local file servers. This allows us to efficiently process your uploaded files and to back up your data locally.

Online Worksheets (Submit Forms)

All online worksheets (what we internally call "submit forms") are sent to us through a secure FTP connection and is SSL encrypted by GeoTrust. This means the data you send to us via our online submit forms is safe and secure. The online worksheets are also safely added to your secure client portal.

Tax Documents and Files

All employees are instructed to not allow tax documents and files to be left unattended. Files are primarily located in a lockable room (the same room that the tax admins work in).

Credit Card Payments

Credit card numbers and associated information is encouraged to be entered directly into our PaySimple credit card processing web portal. If there is a technological reason to record this information on paper, it is immediately shredded after being entered into our payment processing system.

Please contact us with additional questions or concerns. We wanted to briefly explain the several policies and procedures to protect your security and privacy. Thanks!

The Watson CPA Group