

Federal Interim Ban of TikTok on Devices Used in the Performance of Federal Contracts

The U.S. government implemented a ban on TikTok for devices used in the performance of federally funded contracts and subcontracts (the “No TikTok on Government Devices Act”). The ban applies to all devices used in the performance of federal contracts, including personally owned devices and those issued by the university. The ban does not apply to research grants. Faculty, staff, and students conducting research under a federal contract or subcontract, **must immediately** delete TikTok from any device used to perform that research and refrain from accessing TikTok on those devices.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why has this interim rule been issued?

The Federal Register notice states that “This interim rule is being implemented as a national security measure to protect Government information and information and communication technology systems.” This ban is a measure to address the ongoing national security concerns about TikTok, particularly regarding potential espionage risks and the integrity of federally funded activities. The ban is intended to safeguard the security and integrity of federally funded research and development.

What does this rule prohibit?

This rule prohibits having or using TikTok on any device used in work performed under a federal contract or subcontract.

What is meant by performing work on a federally funded contract?

While not specifically defined in this new rule, the following activities could be considered performing work on a device:

- collecting or analyzing data related to the project/contract;
- receiving/sending email specific to the project/contract;
- accessing proposal documents or award documents for the project/contract;
- storing, managing, communicating, distributing, or receiving information related to the project/contract

Who does this apply to?

This rule applies to anyone performing work on a federally funded contract. This means that any faculty, staff, and students that perform work on the federally funded contract must comply with the rule and not use TikTok on any device, including personal devices on which they are performing work related to a federal contract.

I perform research under a federal grant, does this ban apply to me?

No, this ban applies only to federally contracted research; so, if you have a grant from NSF (National Science Foundation), for example, this ban is not applicable to that award.

What devices does this ban apply to?

Any device that is used to perform work under a federal contract. This means phones, tablets, computers provided by the university **OR** personal devices if they are used to perform work under a federal contract.

If I have a federal contract, can I use TikTok on my phone if my only work-related use is email?

No, if you are using the email on your phone to perform work on a federal contract that is subject to this ban, you cannot use TikTok on your phone. Having your Villanova email on your phone constitutes using the device to perform work. This means you must delete TikTok and refrain from accessing it on your phone.

Does the interim status of the rule affect my obligations?

No. as an interim rule, the ban still has full force to prohibit the installation or use of TikTok on devices used in federally contracted or subcontracted research. An interim rule means that the public can comment on it and eventually the rule may be modified. If the rule is modified, then Villanova will provide further notice.

Can I still access TikTok on my laptop or phone on a browser?

No, you cannot download or otherwise access TikTok on any device used in performance of a federal contract. This means that you cannot browse or access TikTok on these devices, regardless of whether it is an application or on a browser.

Can my students and staff who work on the contracted project have TikTok on their devices?

No, anyone who performs work on the federal contract must comply with the ban, regardless of whether they are paid or not for the work. This means that students and staff who work on the research cannot have TikTok or access it on any device they use to perform work. This includes if they have their Villanova email on their personal devices.

What if someone sends me a TikTok video, can I open it?

No, the ban prohibits accessing TikTok via browser as well. If someone sends you a TikTok on a device that you use to work on the federal contract, you may not open it.

How do I uninstall TikTok?

Please contact UNIT (University Information Technologies) to advise you on how to remove TikTok from your devices.

What happens if I don't comply with this ban?

Failing to comply with the ban could subject you to termination of Villanova's federal contract, federal contractual penalties, and/or disciplinary action, as well as possible negative consequences to Villanova as a federal contractor.

Will Villanova be blocking TikTok on campus?

No, at this time Villanova will not be blocking Tik Tok on campus. Villanova is unwaveringly committed to academic freedom, and freedom of expression and inquiry. The right to academic freedom in education and research is foundational to the university's mission. The University blocks access to websites only when they pose an IT security threat or when required by law.

If you have any doubt about whether you need to comply with the ban, please reach out to VPR@villanova.edu.