



PRINCE GEORGE FIRE AND EMS

Section: Administration

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Section No: 1.5

Date: November 1, 2014

Title: Social Media

Authorized By:

I. Purpose:

Fire & EMS Service organizations and their members are utilizing social media networks and the World-Wide-Web at an ever-increasing rate. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube are just a few of the sites being accessed. Written material, comments, video or photography, posted on these sites can be productive to the mission of the department but also could potentially invite significant liability to a member and/or the department. Such postings may be considered by some as a breach of confidentiality, offensive, discriminatory, harassing, and unprofessional. This policy is to provide direction to our members as it relates to social media networks so that the organization and its members can benefit from the technology while being protected from potential liability.

II. Scope:

Members should realize that information (written text, video, pictures) posted on social media sites or the web becomes their personal 'property'. This could be viewed as a positive reflection on the individual and/or the organization or viewed as a negative. Though the intent might be to limit access to the information, often times such communications gets distributed beyond those intended. This policy establishes the Department's position on the management, administration, and oversight of social media.

III. Definitions:

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

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Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site. *Profile:* Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

Web 2.0: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

IV. Procedure:

- A. This policy was not developed to infringe upon personal rights and members may post pictures, videos, written content or other material on their personal social media sites while recognizing that it may still potentially bring harm to the individual as well as the department.

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- B. Members should be cognizant of and shall be accountable for their inappropriate usage of County-owned or personally owned equipment (i.e., telephones, computers, or other devices) that may communicate offensive, intimidating, or unprofessional content that brings discredit to the department.
- C. Members should be aware that representations made on personal social sites could be affiliated with the department and misperceived as representing the views of the department. Speech made pursuant to official duties – that is, owes its existence to the member's professional duties and responsibilities – is not protected speech under the First Amendment. Therefore, such speech may be the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Department.
- D. Members shall not post information, allegations, pictures or videos of/about other department members that could be considered harmful to that individual.
- E. Members shall abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
- F. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - 1. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - 2. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- G. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Department.
 - 1. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 - 2. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- H. Members shall not post department logos, uniforms, or any other departmental property identifying the department on personal sites/web pages in a manner that reflects poor judgment and/or unprofessional actions.

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- I. All Department sanctioned social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Director or his designee and shall be managed only by the individual(s) he approves.
- J. All Department sanctioned social media sites or pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by Prince George Fire & EMS and shall display appropriate contact information.
- K. Information (i.e., pictures, videos, audio etc.) obtained by members on emergency incidents shall not be released or posted on personal sites/web pages.
- L. Non-incident related information displayed in a professional manner may be posted on personal and/or Volunteer Fire and EMS Company social media sites. Such activities may be reviewed by the Company Chief and/or Director of Fire and EMS for compliance to this policy.
- M. Members should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for:
 - 1. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
 - 2. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
 - 3. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
 - 4. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- N. Members should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
- O. Members should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Department at any time without prior notice.

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- P. Any member becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.
- Q. Violations of this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination from the department.

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