



SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORKING

I. PURPOSE

- A. To establish a policy regarding use of social media and social networking by sworn and unsworn members of the Philadelphia Police Department.
 - B. The Philadelphia Police Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight.
 - C. In so doing, this policy sets forth expectations of police department employees with respect to their use of social media and social networking, and the direct effect such use has upon the reputation, perception and interests of the Philadelphia Police Department and its employees.
 - D. As advances in technology are constantly emerging, this policy is intended to address social media in general, rather than singular form of social media or networking.
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II. BACKGROUND

- A. Social media provides a contemporary and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting several police strategies, including, but not limited to, community outreach, problem-solving, investigations and crime prevention. Social media also plays a significant role in the personal lives of numerous department employees. However, it must be formally and universally recognized that the personal use of social media has the potential to impact the department as a whole, as well as individual members serving in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.
- B. As members of the Philadelphia Police Department, employees are embodiments of its mission. It is, thus, essential that each member accept his or her role as an ambassador of the department. In doing so, each member must strive to maintain public trust and confidence, not only in his or her professional capacity, but also in his or her personal and on-line activities. Moreover, as police personnel are necessarily held to a higher

standard than general members of the public, the on-line activities of employees of the police department shall reflect such professional expectations and standards.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

1. **Social Media:** On-line sources that allow people to communicate, share, and/or exchange information with others via some form of on-line or cellular network platform. Information may include, but is not limited to, text, photographs, video, audio, and other multimedia files.
2. **Social Networking:** Involves using such Internet or mobile formats as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Usenet groups, message or on-line bulletin boards, blog and other similarly developed formats, to communicate with others using the same groups while also networking with other users based upon similar interests, geographical location, skills, occupation, ideology, beliefs, etc.
3. **Internet:** A computer network consisting of a worldwide network of computer networks that use the TCP / IP network protocols to facilitate data transmission and exchange.
4. **Post (noun):** An item inserted into a blog, or an entry to any type of computerized bulletin board, forum or social media site.
5. **Post (verb):** The act of creating, uploading, editing or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, photographs, audio, video or any other multimedia file.
6. **Blog:** A series of entries, written by either one person or a group of people, in an online journal, usually posted in chronological order, like a diary. Blogs can allow or disallow comments on entries.
7. **Comments:** Responses to a blog post, news article, social media entry or other social networking post.

IV. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Philadelphia Police Department that all existing laws, rules, regulations, and directives that govern on- and off-duty conduct are applicable to conduct associated with social media and networking.

- B. When engaging in social networking, employees will strictly adhere to any and all of the following:
 - 1. Existing federal, state, and local laws.
 - 2. Policies of the City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Police Department.
 - 3. Laws regarding public information on arrests, investigations, and personnel data.
 - C. Employees are prohibited from using their status as members of the police department to endorse any product or service without prior written permission from the Police Commissioner or his/her designee.
 - D. Employees are prohibited from posting images of police personnel working in an undercover capacity or identifying such personnel as law enforcement officers.
 - E. Employees are prohibited from using City of Philadelphia or Philadelphia Police Department property (on- or off-duty) to engage in personal use of social media.
 - 1. For the purpose of this policy, City and Police Department property includes, but is not limited to, desk-top computers, lap-top computers, cell phones, hand-held digital or electronic devices (e.g., Blackberry phones), and digital storage media.
 - F. While in on-duty status, employees are prohibited from using privately-owned property to engage in personal use of social media.
 - G. Employees who are off-duty, and using privately-owned property to engage in the personal use of social media, do not represent the City of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Police Department, or any official position maintained by either entity. Under such conditions, employees represent only themselves and their personal interests.
 - H. There is no reasonable expectation of privacy when engaging in social networking on-line. As such, the content of social networking websites may be obtained for use in criminal trials, civil proceedings, and departmental investigations.
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V. GENERAL CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

- A. The Philadelphia Police Department recognizes two general categories of social media usage among employees:
 - 1. Department-Authorized Use of Social Media.
 - 2. Personal Use of Social Media.

B. Department-Authorized Use of Social Media:

1. Department-authorized use of social media is defined as the employment of such instruments for the specific purpose of assisting the department and its personnel in community outreach, problem-solving, investigation, crime prevention, and other department-related objectives.
2. In addition to the rules and regulations set forth in Section IV of this directive, the following provisions shall apply to department-authorized use of social media.
 - a. Police department employees seeking to represent the department via social media outlets (e.g., individual or unit web page, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc.) shall obtain express permission from the Police Commissioner or his/ her designee, prior to engaging in such activity.
 - b. Upon obtaining authorization, when engaging in social media networking, employees shall:
 - i. Properly identify themselves as a member of the department.

NOTE: In instances whereby proper identification poses a risk to officer safety or may impede the progress of a criminal investigation, employees, with permission from the Police Commissioner or his/her designee may exclude department membership from their profiles.
 - ii. At all times, conduct themselves as representatives of the department and, accordingly, adhere to all department policies and standards of conduct, and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - iii. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
 - iv. Observe and abide by all existing City of Philadelphia information systems policies, including, but not limited to, "Internet Use and Access" and "Electronic Mail and Messaging."
 - c. When engaging in department-authorized social media networking, department employees shall not under any circumstances:
 - i. Make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions.

- ii. Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos related to department training, activities, investigations, or any other work-related assignment, without specific and express written permission from the Police Commissioner or his/her designee.
- iii. Conduct political activities or private business.

C. Personal Use of Social Media:

1. Personal use of social media is defined as engagement or participation in any personal social networking platform, including but not limited to, personally-owned sites, the sites of others (both known and unknown to the employee), news media pages, professional sites unaffiliated with the Philadelphia Police Department, or other information exchange forums.
2. In addition to the rules and regulations set forth in Section IV of this directive, the following provisions shall apply to personal use of social media while off-duty and using privately-owned property.
 - a. Employees shall neither express nor imply that they are;
 - speaking or acting on behalf of the police department.
 - representing or presenting the interests of the police department.
 - b. Employees shall not use their rank, title, or position in a manner that would suggest that they are representing the interests or official position of the police department.
 - c. Employees shall not post any depiction or illustration of the Official Seal of the City of Philadelphia, or the Philadelphia Police Department name, badge, logo, patch, or patrol vehicle, so as to give the appearance of an official site of the City of Philadelphia or the Philadelphia Police Department.
 - d. In addition to the above provisions, when engaging in personal use of social media, employees shall not post any text, photograph, audio, video, illustration, or any other multimedia file related to, or depicting, any of the following:
 - i. Current, past, or pending departmental investigation.
 - ii. Criminal or civil proceeding pertaining to or arising from any matter involving the department, including allegations of misconduct.

- iii. Brandishing of any weaponry (city-owned or privately-owned; actual or simulated), or any contraband (actual or simulated).
- iv. Brandishing of tactical instruments (both city-owned and privately-owned), including but not limited to firearm, ASP, baton, OC spray, Electronic Control Weapon (ECW), and mechanical restraints.

BY COMMAND OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER
