

 Lexington Police Department	<u>Subject:</u> Department Social Media					<u>Policy Number:</u> 27A	
	<u>Accreditation Standards:</u> <u>Reference: None</u>					<u>Effective Date:</u> 1/1/15	
<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised	<u>Revision Dates:</u>	1/24/19	5/31/20				
<u>By Order of:</u> Mark J. Corr, Chief of Police							

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The 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. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the Department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by Administrative and Supervisory personnel.

PROCEDURE

A. Definitions

1. **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.”
2. **Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
3. **Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
4. **Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

5. **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, Instagram, snapchat), micro-blogging sites (Twitter), photo-and video-sharing sites (YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Reddit).
6. **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
7. **Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication..

B. Employee Responsibilities & Limitations

1. Photographs or other depictions of departmental uniforms, badges, patches, marked units, other departmental property or on duty personnel, including incident scenes, shall not be posted on any internet sites or personal social media pages by department personnel without the approval of the Chief of Police.
2. Employees are prohibited from posting, transmitting, and/or disseminating any pictures or videos of official departmental training, activities, or work-related assignments, without the expressed, written permission of the Chief of Police.
3. Employees shall treat as confidential, all the official business of the department.
4. No employee shall release, either directly or indirectly, information concerning crimes, accidents, or violations of ordinances and/or statutes to persons outside the department, except as authorized by departmental policy under Public Information Function.
5. No employee should gossip about the affairs of the department with persons outside the department.
6. No sexual, violent, racial, ethnically derogatory material, comments, pictures, artwork, video, or other reference may be posted along with any department approved reference.
7. Employees shall not post any material on the internet that brings discredit to or may adversely affect the efficiency or integrity of the Lexington Police Department. In addition, no employee shall use the internet in any way, shape, or form in order to disparage or harass another department or town employee, as well as any other citizen
8. Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet postings, such as future employment, cross-examination in criminal cases, and public, as well as private, embarrassment.
9. Employees are reminded to exercise good judgment and demonstrate personal accountability when choosing to participate on social networking sites such as

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Use of these types of sites while on duty shall be restricted to official departmental business only

10. Employees becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting on any website or web page in violation of the provisions of this policy are strongly encouraged to notify his/her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

C. On-The-Job Use

1. Department-Sanctioned Presence

a. Determine strategy

- i. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Departments presence on the website.
- ii. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Department's official website.
- iii. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as youth or potential police recruits.

b. Procedures

- i. All Police Department Social Media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief or his/ her designee and shall be consistent with all policies.
- ii. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- iii. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - (a) Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - (b) Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- iv. 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.
 - (a) 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.
 - (b) Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

c. Department-Sanctioned Use

- i. Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - (a) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - (b) Identify themselves as a member of the department.
 - (c) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
 - (d) Not conduct political activities or private business.
- ii. The use of Police Department computers by staff to access social media is prohibited “without authorization”.
- iii. Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department’s social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited “without authorization”.
- iv. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

d. Potential Uses

- i. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
 - (a) missing persons;
 - (b) wanted persons;
 - (c) gang participation;
 - (d) crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking);
 - (e) photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer; and
 - (f) potential new hires (background investigations)
- ii. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
 - (a) providing crime prevention tips;
 - (b) offering online-reporting opportunities;
 - (c) sharing crime maps and data; and
 - (d) Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crime stoppers, text-a-tip).

- iii. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to
 - (a) road closures,
 - (b) special events,
 - (c) weather emergencies, and
 - (d) missing or endangered persons.
- iv. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism
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- vi. This department has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
- vii. Searches should be conducted by a background investigator. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.
- viii. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
- ix. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
- x. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
- xi. Every effort must be made to validate Internet based information considered during the hiring process.