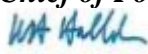




COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

“Policing Excellence through Community Partnerships”

Directive Type: General Order	Effective Date: 08-1-2018	General Order Number: 01.07
Subject: Use of Social Media		
Amends/Supersedes: Special Order 2014-02	Chief of Police: 	
Distribution: All Personnel	Review Date: July 1	# of Pages: 5

1.0 PURPOSE

The City of Columbia Police Department recognizes the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the department and our current, past and potential activities, employees, on-going investigations, and day-to-day operations. The City of Columbia Police Department also identifies with the importance of its employees joining in and helping shape the department’s image and the direction through interaction with social media forums. The City of Columbia Police Department is committed to supporting employee’s right to interact knowledgeable, responsibly, socially and legally on the internet through interaction in social media.

Consequently, the guidelines in this social media policy will help sworn and non-sworn employees make appropriate decisions about the work-related and the personal contents of their blogs, personal websites, and other interactive sites, to include postings on video and picture sharing sites, or in the comment sections made within the various blogs, elsewhere on the public internet, and in responding to comments from posters either publicly, via email or direct messenger.

These guidelines are intended to help employees open a respectful, knowledgeable interaction with people on the internet. They also protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the City of Columbia Police Department and our current and potential activities, employees, investigations and daily operations.

Note that these policies and guidelines apply not only to work-related postings but will also address employee’s off-duty behavior as it relates to the City of Columbia Police Department, however, it is not meant to infringe upon employee’s personal interaction or commentary online. This policy is also not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology occur and new tools emerge.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Social Media: It is primarily an internet and mobile based tool for sharing and discussing information and ideas among people. Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the City of Columbia Police Department and its personnel in meeting community problem-solving, investigative aid, collaborations in crime prevention, and other related investigative areas that will provide a means to streamline processes and advance productivity.

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.

Post: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Public Concern: Speech of such common interest to the public at large that the employee’s comments on the matter evidence an expression of an individual citizen and not by virtue of their position at the City of Columbia Police Department.

False Statement: A statement which is deceitful, misleading or untrue.

Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

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

3.0 DIRECTIVE

As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and this department.

3.1 Use of the City of Columbia Police Department Social Media

The use of all department social media sites or pages will be approved by the Chief of Police or designee and will be primarily administered and maintained by the Office of the Chief. The use of department computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization.

The department’s social media sites or pages will indicate that they are maintained by the City of Columbia Police Department. They will have City of Columbia Police Department contact information displayed and each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency’s presence. It will adhere to applicable laws and regulations, including all City of Columbia Information Technology and Records Management policies. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department’s official website.

Official department social media sites and pages shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the site/page do not reflect the opinions of the City of Columbia Police Department and reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

Personnel representing the department must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the department and shall adhere to department standards and polices. **Therefore, Employees are prohibited from:**

- Sharing information about the City of Columbia Police Department that is confidential or for law enforcement use only. This includes information about current or active investigations, department

and/or employee rumors, personal opinions or thoughts or any other information that has not been publicly released by the City of Columbia Police Department.

- Posting, transmitting, reproducing, and/or disseminating information (text, pictures, video, audio, etc.) to the internet or any other forum (public or private) that would tend to discredit or reflect unfavorably upon the CPD or any of the department's employees.
- Expressing personal opinions on any suspect or arrestee, or comment on any pending prosecution.
- Affiliating with, or advocating for, any political party or private business.
- Personal usage including, but not limited to, letters, memoranda, electronic communications such as web sites and web pages of the trademarked badge/shield, uniform patch or department name is prohibited. **All employees' photos/videos are authorized usage of the department name, badge, shield and uniform patch for official CPD business.**
- Using any electronic device (i.e. cell phones, laptops, smartphones, etc.) department issued or personal, to post, upload or download any department or job related information to any social media outlet is explicitly prohibited unless it is a site approved through the Office of the Chief of Police or designee.

These are given as examples only and do not cover the entire range of what the City of Columbia Police Department considers work sensitive and confidential. If you have any question about whether information can be released publicly or doubts of any kind, speak with your supervisor and/or the Public Information Officer before releasing information that could potentially harm the City of Columbia Police Department, or its employees, family members, witnesses, victims or suspects.

The Office of the Chief will be responsible for approving and monitoring on a regular basis all approved sites in order to ensure appropriate usage and representation of the department.

3.2 Use of Social Media Outlets for Investigative or Research Purposes

Social media outlets may be used by personnel for investigative or research purposes such as:

- Crime analysis and situational assessment reports;
- Criminal intelligence development; and
- Criminal investigations

Employees will only utilize social media to seek or retain information that:

- Is based upon a criminal predicate or threat to public safety; or
- Is based upon reasonable suspicion that an identifiable individual, regardless of citizenship or U.S. residency status, or organization has committed an identifiable criminal offense or is involved in or is planning criminal conduct or activity that presents a threat to any individual, the community, or the nation and the information is relevant to the criminal conduct or activity; or
- Is relevant to the investigation and prosecution of suspected criminal incidents; or
- Is useful in crime analysis or situational assessment reports for the administration of criminal justice and public safety.

Employees utilizing social media as an investigative tool will:

- Use only department electronic equipment throughout the investigation.
- Conduct an investigation only while on duty.
- Follow the guidelines previously set forth in this document.
- Only use publicly available open source material.

Employees utilizing social media as an investigative tool will not:

- Use their personal social media account, personal account information, or personal electronic devices to access the social media content.
- Use another individual's personal account without his/her consent.

Employees are reminded any personal electronic devices used on duty and/or in an official capacity may be subject to review, subpoena, discovery, public records requests, and/or seized for possible evidentiary value.

3.3 Personal Use: Precautions and Prohibitions

Speak respectfully about the City of Columbia Police Department and its current and potential employees, victims, witnesses, suspects and supervisors.

Do not engage in name calling or behavior that will reflect negatively on the City of Columbia Police Department's reputation.

Note that the use of copyrighted materials, unfounded, false or hurtful statements, or misrepresentation is not viewed favorably by the City of Columbia or the City of Columbia Police Department and can result in disciplinary action up to and including employment termination.

The City of Columbia Police Department encourages employees to write knowledgeably, accurately, and using appropriate professionalism. Despite disclaimers, internet interactions can result in members of the public forming opinions about the City of Columbia Police Department's employees, and/or policies.

Honor the privacy rights of department current and past employees by seeking their permission before writing about or displaying internal City of Columbia Police happenings that might be considered to be a breach of their privacy and confidentiality.

In commenting in areas of private concern, Employees should be conscious not to post information or opinions which would negatively impact on any of the rights of other individuals, the City of Columbia and its employees, or litigants in any case which the City of Columbia Police Department has any interest.

Employees may comment on matters of public concern in the same manner as any citizen in the community. However, when commenting on such matters, if the Employee is commenting as a Columbia Police Officer or representative of the City of Columbia and not as a private citizen, their speech may be subject to review and potential discipline.

When using social media sites, employees should be mindful that their rhetoric becomes archived in a worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, personnel should adhere to the department's code of conduct while engaging in social media.

Employees shall not, under any circumstance, engage in prohibited speech that could potentially undermine or discredit an officer's testimony in a criminal proceeding.

Employees should recognize that they are legally liable for anything they write or present online. Personnel can be disciplined by the City of Columbia or the City of Columbia Police Department for commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment. Individuals can also be sued by City of Columbia employees, and any individual or company that views employee commentaries, content, or images as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, or libelous.

Personnel should be aware that privacy and account settings are ambiguous and should never assume that personal information is protected.

Employees should be aware that all social networking sites are subject to monitoring and, if found to be used inappropriately, could result in disciplinary action.