

# DEERFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

## GENERAL ORDER

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Social Media		Review Date	08/20/13
Chief of Police 	PATROL	Page	1 of 5

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to endorse the use of social media, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest and 4Square 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.

### POLICY

Social media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative and 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. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of department personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on department personnel 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.

### DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

**Blog** – A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions or comments.

**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.

**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), micro blogging sites (Twitter), 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.

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

**DeerfieldILPD** – The official Deerfield Police Department username for Twitter.

**Deerfield Police Department** – The official Deerfield Police Department Facebook account name.

**PROCEDURES**

A. Official Use

- a. The Department shall maintain a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social media as it emerges and becomes necessary.
  - i. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.
  - ii. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website.

B. Procedures

- a. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief executive or his or her designee and shall be administered by designated personnel as directed by the Chief of Police or as otherwise determined.
- b. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
  - i. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content to the full extent possible.
- d. All social media pages shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department. This can be via the Terms of Service (Addendum A) or within the page itself.
  - i. 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.
  - ii. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

C. Department Sanctioned Use

- a. Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
  - i. 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.
  - ii. Identify themselves as a member of the department; anonymous posting is not allowed.
  - iii. 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.
  - iv. Not conduct political activities or private business.
    1. The use of department computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization.

2. 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 express written permission.
3. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

D. Authorizations

- a. Personnel may post pertinent and time sensitive items, but are encouraged to have a supervisor review such posting if time and need exists.

E. Potential Uses

- a. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
  - i. Missing persons;
  - ii. Wanted persons;
  - iii. Gang participation;
  - iv. Crimes perpetrated online (i.e. cyber bullying, cyber stalking); and
  - v. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
- b. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
  - i. Providing crime prevention tips;
  - ii. Offering online reporting opportunities;
  - iii. Sharing crime maps and data; and
  - iv. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e. Crime Stoppers, text-a-tip).
- c. Social media can be used to make time sensitive notifications related to:
  - i. Road closures;
  - ii. Special events;
  - iii. Weather emergencies;
  - iv. Missing or endangered; and
  - v. Employment opportunities.

F. Personal Use

- a. Unless otherwise allowed, department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:
  - i. Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.

- ii. As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities 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.
- iii. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the chief executive or his or her designee.
- iv. For safety and security reasons, department personnel are cautioned to use discretion when disclosing employment with this department. Additionally, personnel shall not post information pertaining to any other member of the department without their permission. As such, department personnel should use discretion when posting:
  - 1. Department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages.
  - 2. Personal photographs or providing similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as a police officer of this department. Officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
- v. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the department's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
  - 1. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion or any protected class of individuals.
  - 2. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
- vi. To preserve the integrity of an officer's testimony in any type of litigation, any speech or postings that are prohibited, may undermine and impeach that testimony. Thusly personnel in violation of this policy are subject to discipline up to and including termination from office.
- vii. Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without express authorization.
- viii. Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that:
  - 1. 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;
  - 3. Is not of legitimate public concern;
  - 4. Would be offensive to a reasonable person;

5. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose;
  6. Publishing confidential business information for personal gain without the permission of the owner.
- ix. Department personnel 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.
  - x. Department personnel 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.
  - xi. Reporting Violations: Any employee 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.

This Order supersedes all previous written and unwritten policies of the Deerfield Police Department on the above subject.

Attachments: Addendum A – [Social Media Terms of Service and Takedown Policy](#)