



BOCA RATON POLICE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Departmental Standards Directive 54.105

DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA

Revised: [new](#)

I. PURPOSE:

This policy establishes this Department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its 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.

II. POLICY:

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. The Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange, streamline processes, and foster productivity.

III. DEFINITIONS:

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), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and videos 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.

Valid Law Enforcement Purpose: Community outreach initiatives along with information and intelligence gathering for retention or sharing that furthers the normal functions of the Department that include, but are not limited to: detection of crime, protecting the community, promoting office safety, enforcing the laws and ordinances and supporting homeland security efforts.

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

IV. PROCEDURE:

A. DEPARTMENT-RELATED USE OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION:

1. 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.
2. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Department's official website.
3. All Department social media sites or pages shall be used for valid law enforcement purposes and approved by the chief of police. Participation in social media networking sites shall be administered by the Public Information Office or as otherwise determined.
4. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Department and shall have Department contact information prominently displayed.
5. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 the express permission from the chief of police or designated supervisor.

d. Not conduct political activities or private business.

8. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

9. Social media may be used for the following circumstances:

a. As an investigative tool

b. For community outreach and engagement by:

i. Providing crime prevention tips

ii. Offering online-reporting opportunities

iii. Sharing crime maps and data

iv. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (e.g., CrimeStoppers, text-a-tip).

c. Making time-sensitive notifications related to:

i. Road closures

ii. Special events

iii. Weather emergencies

iv. Missing or endangered persons.

d. Pre-employment background investigations.

B. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS:

1. As part of the pre-employment background process, Profession Standards Bureau personnel will conduct a search of social media websites within the public domain. Applicants will not be required to disclose passwords to social media sites.

2. Only those comments and images that constitute admissions to or suggest participation in criminal conduct or conduct that if committed by an employee of the Department would constitute a violation of the rules and regulations, will be collected and incorporated in the background investigation.

C. CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS AND CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE:

1. The use of Department hardware and software to access social media in criminal investigations will be for valid law enforcement purposes only consistent with applicable statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations.

2. As with any investigation or intelligence gathering activity, any form of discrimination or profiling based on sex, race, creed, gender, religion, age, marital status, national origin, sensory, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or veteran status is prohibited.

3. Social media websites within the public domain may provide valuable information relevant to criminal investigations and tactical planning and operations. Law enforcement officers are authorized to utilize Department equipment to access social media websites for these purposes consistent with current computer usage policy and procedure.

Approved:

Daniel C. Alexander
Chief of Police

Date: