



MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

Subject: *Social Media and Networking*

Number: 258-A

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Rescinds: *Use of City and Agency Images, Recordings and Logos* Dated: July 24-2009

Approved By:

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to outline expectations of employees with respect to their use of social media and social networking and the direct effect such use has upon the reputation and perception of the department.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this procedure, the following definitions apply:

1. Social Media – a variety of online sources that allows people to communicate, share information, photos, videos and exchange text and other multimedia files with others via some form of online or cellular network platform.
2. Social Networking – using such Internet or mobile formats as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Linked In, Foursquare, Usenet groups, online forums, message boards or bulletin boards, blogs 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, belief, etc.
3. Mobile Social Networking – social networking using a mobile phone or other cellular base device.
4. 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.

5. World Wide Web – a part of the Internet accessed through a graphical user interface and containing documents often connected by hyperlinks; also called the Web. (Merriam-Webster).
6. Blog – a web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer; also: the contents of such a site. (Merriam-Webster) Blogs can allow comments on entries or not.
7. Blogging – to read, write or edit a shared online journal. Blogging can also encompass the act of commenting and engaging with other commenters on any blog including one operated by a third party.
8. Post – an item inserted to a blog or an entry to any type of computerized bulletin board or forum.
9. Posting – the act of creating, uploading, editing or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, photographs, audio, video or any other multimedia file.
10. Forum – an online discussion site.
11. Comments – responses to a blog post, news article, social media entry or other social networking post.
12. Commenting – the act of creating and posting a response to a blog post, news article, social media entry or other social networking post. Commenting also entails the act of posting an original composition to an unrelated post or article.
13. Avatar – a computer user's representation of him/herself, or an alter ego.
14. Identity – an online identity, Internet identity or Internet persona that a social networking user establishes. Can be a real name, an alias, a pseudonym or a creative description.
15. Handle – the name of one's online identity that is used most frequently. It can also be the name of one's Twitter identity.
16. User Name – the name provided by the participant during the registration process associated with a Web site that will be displayed publicly on site.

PROCEDURE

1. Employees shall not use any form of social media or social networking, online forums, message boards or bulletin boards, logs and other similarly developed formats in any way so as to tarnish the reputation of a fellow employee, the department, or city. Complaints shall be addressed through existing channels of communication through the chain of command.

2. As employees of the Myrtle Beach Police Department, it is vital that each accepts their role as ambassadors of the department and city, striving to maintain public trust and confidence, not only in professional actions, but also in personal and online actions. Any online activity that has the effect of diminishing the public's trust and/or confidence of the department, will hinder the efforts to fulfill the mission, and will be subject to discipline.

3. Employees should exercise caution and good judgment when social networking online. Employees shall be aware that the content of these social networking sites can be subpoenaed and used in criminal and civil trials to impeach the employee's testimony.

- A. Officers are prohibited from using department computers or cell phones/devices for any unauthorized purpose, including participation in social media or social networking.
- B. Officers are prohibited from using any social media or social networking platform while on duty, unless permission is granted for investigative or public information purposes.
- C. Unless granted explicit permission, officers are prohibited from posting any of the following on any social networking platform, whether on their own sites, the sites of others known to the officer, the sites of others unknown to the officer, news media pages, or other information exchange forum:
 - 1) Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file related to any investigation, both current and past, of this department.
 - 2) Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file related to any past or current action of this department, whether in homage or critique.
 - 3) Logos, badges, seals, uniforms, vehicles, equipment or any item or symbol affiliated with the department.
 - 4) Any item, symbol, wording, number, likeness or material that is identifiable to the department.
 - 5) Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file that is related to any occurrence with the department.

- D. Employees who choose to maintain or participate in social media or social networking platforms while off duty shall conduct themselves with professionalism and in such a manner that will not reflect negatively upon the department. In the course of operating or participating in such venues, the following rules shall apply:
- 1) Unless explicitly granted permission by the department, officer shall not identify themselves, in any way, as an employee of the department.
 - 2) Employees shall not use any reference to infer they are employees of the department during social media or social networking participation or maintenance.
 - 3) Employees will be held responsible for the content that appears on their maintained social media or social networking sites and will be obligated to remove any posting or material contributed by others that identifies the officer as an employee of the department.
 - 4) Employees will be held responsible for the content that appears on their maintained social media or social networking sites and will be obliged to remove any posting or material contributed by others that reflects negatively upon the department.
 - 5) Sexually graphic or explicit material of any kind shall not be posted by the employee on any form of social media or social networking site.
 - 6) Weaponry, owned by the department and/or owned personally or privately, shall not be displayed or referenced to, in any multimedia format, on social media or social networking sites if such displays or depictions promote or glorify violence.
 - 7) Any text, photograph, audio, video or any other multimedia file included on a social media or social networking site that infers, implies, states, opines, or otherwise expresses the employee's views on the public, shall not be detrimental to the department, nor shall it in any way undermine the public's trust or confidence in the department.
 - 8) Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file included on a social media or social networking site that infers, implies, states, opines, or otherwise expresses the employee's views on the legal, judicial or criminal systems shall not, in any way, undermine the public trust and confidence of the department.
 - 9) Any text, photograph, audio, video, or any other multimedia file included on a social media or social networking site shall not comment or reference individual cases past, current, or pending, nor shall they invade the privacy of citizens that are in any process of the criminal justice system, a

defendant, witness, victim, lawyer, or judge, and the employee shall preserve and protect the information the city holds in trust or in observation of privacy protection laws, such as HIPPA.

- E. Unless serving as an explicitly permitted tool of public information or community outreach, no employee shall use their rank and/or title in any social media or social networking activity, including inclusion of said rank and/or title into the officer's online identity or avatar.
- F. Employees are prohibited from using their title/position in private correspondence, whether electronic or hard copy. This includes, but not limited to signature lines in a personal email account.
- G. Employees who are brought under administrative or internal investigation related to their performance, functionality or duties, may be ordered to provide the department, or designated investigator, with access to the social media and social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain.
- H. Employees who are brought under administrative or internal investigation related to the department's operation, productivity, efficiency, morale, or reputation, may be ordered to provide the department or its designated investigator, with access to the social media and social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain.
- I. Any candidate seeking employment with this department shall complete an affidavit attesting to all the social media and social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain. The candidate shall be required to provide the designated background investigator with access to the social networking platforms in which they participate or maintain.

While this Procedure directly addresses the use of social media and social networking, the City's Policy Manual, in Article 6 Section 11, addresses the use of computers for personal business.