

STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER

INTERNET POSTING & USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
SUBJECT

DATE: December 1, 2014

NO: I-4a

FROM: CHIEF ERIC JONES

TO: ALL PERSONNEL

INDEX: Internet Posting
Social Media

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to the employees of the Stockton Police Department regarding use of the internet as a medium of communication impacting this department.

The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the 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.

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 the Office of the Chief of Police. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental 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.

In order for the Department to further its mission and perform its core functions, we must rely upon and maintain the public's confidence and trust in individual officers and the department as a whole. Matters which may bring an employee or the department into disrepute have the corresponding effect of reducing public confidence and trust in our agency, thus, impeding our ability to work with and serve the public. Professionalism is the most significant factor in high level performance, which, in turn, builds the public's confidence and trust.

While everyone has the right to use personal social networking pages or sites, as employees of this agency we are public servants who are held to a higher standard than the general public with regard to standards of conduct and ethics. As such, it is our policy to maintain levels of professionalism in both on-duty and off-duty conduct that fulfills the department's mission. Members shall not use the internet in a manner which is detrimental to the mission and function of the department. Any internet posting or publication through any electronic communication medium, which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, or efficiency of the department, will be deemed a violation of this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, "the internet" includes social networking sites, web logs ("blogs"), the World Wide Web, and similar means of communication. Examples of such communication medium include, but are not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, etc.

DEFINITIONS:

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 administrative rights.
- 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 site (Facebook), micro blogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites.
- 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.
- Web 2.0: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.
- Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

III. **ON-THE-JOB USE**

A. Department-Sanctioned Presence

1. Strategy

- a. 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.
- b. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website.
- c. Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s), such as youth, potential police recruits, neighborhood watch, etc.

2. Procedures

- a. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Office of the Chief of Police, registered and approved with the City Manager's Office, and shall be administered by the Department's Public Information Office or other as directed by the Chief of Police.
- 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.
 - (1) Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - (2) Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with public records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- d. Where possible, social media pages should state the opinions expressed by visitors to the pages do not reflect the opinions of the department.
 - (1) 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.
 - (2) Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

3. Department-Sanctioned Use

- a. Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - (1) 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.

- (2) Identify themselves as a member of the department.
- (3) 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 permission from the Office of the Chief of Police.
- (4) Not conduct political activities or private business.

b. The use of department computers by department personnel to access social media and internet is as follows:

- (1) Department members shall adhere to the guidelines regarding internet use at work set forth in City Manager Administrative Directive IT-07, "Internet Access and Acceptable Use," which states, in part:

"The **primary** purpose for City employees' access to the Internet is to facilitate the conduct of City-related business. It is the policy of the City of Stockton that personal use of the Internet shall be kept to a minimum. In all cases such use shall be reasonable and incidental, and limited to breaks, lunch hour, and before or after working hours."

- c. Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited, unless authorized by the Chief of Police.
- d. Department personnel shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Potential Uses

- 1. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
 - a. Missing persons
 - b. Wanted person
 - c. Gang participation
 - d. Crime perpetrated online
 - e. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer
- 2. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
 - a. Providing crime prevention tips,
 - b. Offering on-line reporting opportunities
 - c. Sharing crime maps and data
 - d. Soliciting tips about unsolved crime (i.e., Crime Stoppers, text-a-tip)
 - e. Posting Watch Commander Reports
- 3. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
 - a. road closures, special events, weather emergencies, missing persons
- 4. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruit mechanism.

IV. PERSONAL USE

A. Precautions and Prohibitions

Barring Federal / State Law or binding employment contracts to the contrary,

department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:

1. 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, impeded the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.
2. As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties---that is, 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.
3. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without permission from the Office of the Chief of Police. Such information includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Video files, audio files, photographs / images related to any Department training, incident, call-for-service, case, or investigation.
4. For safety and security reasons, department personnel are cautioned not to disclose their employment with this department nor shall they post information pertaining to any other member of the department without that member's permission. As such, department personnel are advised to use good judgment when:
 - a. Placing or allowing photographs, videos, or depictions of themselves dressed in the Stockton Police Department uniform and / or displaying official identification, patches or badges, or in any other way, either directly or indirectly, identifying themselves as a member of the department for any reason; or
 - b. Posting photographs, videos or other depictions of department uniforms, badges, patches, or department vehicles on internet sites.
5. Department personnel shall not place photographs, videos, or depictions of themselves that depict logos, patches, badges, or other identifying symbol of this agency in an unprofessional manner.
6. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
 - a. 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, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
 - b. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be reckless, irresponsible, or promotes violence.
7. 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.
8. Department personnel are reminded to exercise good judgment and demonstrate personal accountability when choosing to participate on social networking sites.