

Asheville Police Department Policy Manual

Chapter: 3 - Code of Conduct

Policy: 305 - Social Media

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Introduction

The Asheville Police Department recognizes that department members have a right to use social media and the significant role it can play in a member's personal life. This policy is intended to address only such social media activity that is fundamentally inconsistent with agency values, bears on an employee's official duties, or suggests that the employee is posting on behalf of the APD. This policy does not prohibit department members from engaging in any social media activity protected by the First Amendment.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Asheville Police Department (APD) to provide guidelines to department members on the professional and personal use of social media. [This policy is intended to provide guidelines specific to department employees and is supplemental to the guidelines provided by the City of Asheville Social Media Policy.](#)

Definitions

Department Spokesperson: any member of the APD who has been authorized by the chief of police or designee to communicate with and/or deliver information to the general public and social/news media on behalf of the APD.

Social Media: a collective term referring to various online platforms, applications, or technologies enabling the sharing of electronic user-generated text, audio, photographic, video, or multimedia files.

Social Media Site: an internet site or application where users create and share content and participate in online communities and conversations, in the form of a page, profile, account, group, or other presence. These include, but are not limited to, blogs, forums, chat sites, Facebook, X, Instagram, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, Reddit, Slack, Snapchat, and YouTube, as well as emerging new platforms generally regarded as social media or having many of the same functions as those listed.

Rules And Procedures

305.1 Personal Use Of Social Media

- A. All department members have a duty to adhere to the department's conduct and ethical requirements. Misconduct of any kind, regardless of whether it occurs on social media, is governed by the department's [Rules of Conduct](#).
- B. Department members have a right to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites; however, members will not:
 - 1. Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information, videos, or images in any format that reveals privileged or confidential information obtained from employment with the APD.
 - 2. Unless authorized, make representations on behalf of the APD, or give the impression of making a representation on behalf of APD.
 - 3. Make, share, or comment in support of any posting that includes criminal conduct, threats of violence, or otherwise violates any law.
 - 4. Make, share, or comment in support of any posting disparaging any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class of individual.
 - 5. Make any comments or post any information that could have a substantially adverse impact on the morale, efficiency, or operation of the department.
- C. Department members are personally responsible for any content they "like", publish, forward, or post to the internet and/or social media sites.
- D. For the safety of department members, it is recommended that sworn officers do not disclose or allude to their status as APD members on social media and be cautious of posts that reveal the employment of other department members without their consent. The disclosure of information that identifies an officer as

an APD employee may limit an officer's ability to serve in certain undercover or sensitive assignments.

- E. Department members should not assume any expectation of privacy when posting information to the internet or a social media site, regardless of user privacy settings or other access controls.
- F. Department members will not knowingly engage in any type of social media contact (e.g., friending, following, etc.) that would hamper, interfere with, or otherwise prejudice an open or ongoing investigation, case, or court action.

305.2 Department Use of Social Media [54.1.1 g]

- A. Only the chief of police, the chief's designee, or a department spokesperson may post, comment, or reply on social media sites on behalf of the department.
- B. APD will clearly identify its official social media accounts.
- C. When representing the department, department spokespersons will:
 - 1. Limit interaction and comments to information within the public domain.
 - 2. Not release any information that in any way may be considered confidential.
 - 3. Ensure that all content is accurate and in compliance with department policies.
- D. The Criminal Investigations Division may coordinate with a department spokesperson when an ongoing investigation would benefit from social media.

By order of:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Zack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Zack
Chief of Police