



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

409 Social Media – Department Usage

Section 400 – Professional Conduct

Effective Date: 4/18/2022

Supersedes Date: 11/22/2021

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the use, management, and oversight of various social media platforms to communicate and disseminate information to the community, on behalf of the department.

.02 Cross-Reference

[GO 121 Fair & Impartial Policing](#)

[GO 400 Employee Conduct \(Sworn and Civilian\)](#)

[GO 401 Police Officer Conduct](#)

[GO 600 Complaints and Internal Investigations](#)

.03 Discussion

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in providing digital community outreach, crime prevention, problem-solving, investigative, and similarly related objectives. The goal is to utilize social media websites with the effective and appropriate information, security, and privacy controls to convey factual and timely messages.

The Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes, and foster productivity. The selection of online media platforms utilized by the department will be dependent upon the business value provided. It is anticipated that these guidelines will evolve as new technologies and social media tools emerge.

.04 Policy

CSPD has a significant interest in determining what is conveyed on behalf of the department via social media websites; therefore, all CSPD personnel who participate in disseminating social media, on behalf of the department, will comply with this directive.

Personnel designated to represent the department on social media outlets and web pages will conduct themselves as an official representative of the department, at all times. Accordingly, all department standards of conduct apply to these sites, and personnel will observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum in their activities on these sites. All postings will be factual, accurate, complete, and within their area of expertise.

The use or creation of all departmental social media sites or pages will be approved by the chief of police, or designee, and will be administered by the Public Affairs Section or another appropriate unit as determined by the chief.

As a public entity, CSPD must abide by applicable standards to ensure service to all constituents is conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

CSPD reserves the right to deny access to CSPD social media websites to any individual who violates any portion of CSPD's social media policy.

.05 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 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, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, 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 sharable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. This term may be used interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web pages that can be edited collaboratively.

.10 Department Webpages

All social media pages or sites will clearly indicate that they are maintained by the department and will have contact information for the department prominently displayed.

Each social media page or site should include:

- An introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the webpage, if possible.
- A link to the department's official website,
- Designed with the target audience in mind (e.g., youth, potential police recruits, etc.)
- Indication that posted comments will be monitored
- Statements indicating the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks
- Indication that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure

Social media sites will include the following statement, *"The opinions expressed by webpage visitors do not reflect the opinions or views of the Colorado Springs Police Department."*

.12 Personnel Expectations

Personnel representing the department will 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 consent. Employees will not conduct political activities or private business on department sites or pages.

Employees of the CSPD will not share personal information about themselves, or any other CSPD employee on any CSPD sanctioned social media website.

The use of departmental computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization. The use of personally owned devices or computers to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without authorization.

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

CSPD sections or units with sanctioned social media websites will monitor their sites for posts requesting responses from citizens and for comments that violate this directive.

.15 Uses of Social Media

Social media may be used as an investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:

- Missing Persons
- Wanted Persons
- Gang Participation
- Crimes perpetrated online (e.g., cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking)
- Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer
- Any other legitimate investigative purpose

Social media also may be used for community outreach and engagement by:

- Providing crime prevention tips
- Offering online reporting opportunities
- Sharing crime maps and data
- Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (e.g., Crime Stoppers)

Social media may also be used as an additional resource to make time-sensitive notifications related to:

- Road closures
- Special events
- Weather emergencies
- Missing or endangered persons
- Another time-sensitive event

Social media can also be a powerful recruiting tool for persons seeking employment or volunteer positions. Department members are encouraged to utilize social media sites to assist with recruiting potential candidates for employment or volunteer positions within the department.

Department personnel with ideas for potential uses of social media may submit suggestions via an interoffice memo for approval through their chain of command to the chief of police.

.20 Public Comments

Any/all comments posted by a member of the public on any CSPD social media web site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement, or agreement by, the CSPD, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the CSPD.

Comments on governmental social media sites may be classified as free speech protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution; as such, a careful and thoughtful analysis of the post must be conducted prior to any removal. In certain circumstances, it may be deemed appropriate to consult with legal counsel before removing a social media post or comment.

Posts or comments on a departmental sanctioned social media site containing any of the following forms of content, as deemed inappropriate, will not be permitted and are subject to removal by the CSPD Public Information Officer (PIO), or their designee:

- Profane, obscene, or pornographic content and/or language
- Content that could compromise an ongoing investigation
- Any personal identifying information of any person
- Threats to any person or organization
- Solicitation of commerce, including, but not limited to, advertising of any business or product for sale
- Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as copyright or trademark of any party

CSPD should provide a warning and explanation prior to blocking a person's access to CSPD sites.

.22 Reporting Inappropriate Comments

Any employee who observes or otherwise becomes aware of a post that could be in violation of this provision of the directive should notify the PIO's Office. The representative from the PIO's Office receiving such notification will evaluate whether or not the comment will be removed from the site.

.30 Social Media Cadre

In an effort to better connect with the community through social media, the department has established a Social Media Cadre, not only providing critical public safety information but to building community trust through transparency. The cadre consists of sworn officers and supervisors, as well as civilians, from different areas throughout the department.

While the PIO's office is responsible for the formal release of information, the Social Media Cadre assists by capturing the department narrative and illustrating community involvement activities that occur independently from the PIO's office.

The primary goal of the Social Media Cadre is to document activities and stories from their respective divisions that may be highlighted on social media. Cadre personnel will not post anything to the department's social media sites, only provide their stories to the PIO's office. The PIO's office will determine what is and is not released on CSPD social media platforms.

All Cadre personnel must be recommended by a supervisor, vetted through Internal Affairs, and receive social media training through the Public Information Office. These positions are voluntary and will not interfere with any primary job duties.

.40 Public Records Access

Social media content will adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.

Information contained on these sites is subject to the public records laws, and relevant records retention schedules apply to their content.

All content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

CSPD social media sites may be subject to the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA). Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to department business, including a list of subscribers, posted communications, and communications submitted for posting, may be a public record subject to public disclosure. Additionally, all contents on CSPD social media sites could be subpoenaed into court.