



CHATHAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP # OPS-070:
SOCIAL MEDIA

EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/01/18
REVISION: 08/31/20

PURPOSE

The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange. 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.

POLICY

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting information dissemination and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel.

This policy is designed to control the internal agency-related use of social media and networking outlets. All other usage is delineated within the SOP ADM-019 Networking and Internet Use and must be adhered to by all personnel.

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 (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, CodeRED), photo- and video-sharing sites (Twitter, Flickr, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat), 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.

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.

I. POTENTIAL USES

- A. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
 - 1. Missing persons;
 - 2. Wanted persons;
 - 3. Gang participation;
 - 4. Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking); and
 - 5. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.
- B. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
 - 1. Providing crime prevention tips;
 - 2. Sharing crime maps and data;
 - 3. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes;
 - 4. Highlighting positive efforts of officers and civilian staff; and
 - 5. Showcase and promote community and youth outreach events and activities
- C. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to;
 - 1. Road closures,
 - 2. Special events,
 - 3. Weather emergencies, and 4. Missing or endangered persons.
- D. Social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism used to attract persons seeking employment positions and volunteer opportunities.

II. MANAGEMENT OF NETWORKING ACCOUNTS

- A. Agency social networking accounts are established and maintained by the agency's Public Information Office who will have primary responsibility for the maintenance of the content contained on or distributed through the sites.
- B. The Public Information Office will rely heavily on personnel from public affairs, crime prevention officers, patrol, CID and other areas to contribute information in a timely manner. In certain circumstances, postings will need to be made within minutes of an incident occurring, such as for ongoing dangers within the community, critical missing persons, or major traffic disruptions.

III. AUTHORIZATION OF POSTINGS

- A. The Public Information Office will have overall authority of what is posted and distributed through the social networking sites and the duration that the postings will remain on the sites. For sensitive or incident related material, the Public Information Office will consult with the CID or patrol commander before posting any material.
- B. Personnel authorized to access, post and modify social media accounts are:
 - 1. CCPD Public Information Office;
 - 2. The Chatham County Public Relations Director and their designees
 - a. They will have administrative rights to the department's social media sites as determined by the County Manager.
- C. In certain circumstances, postings will need to be made within minutes of an incident occurring (such as for ongoing dangers within the community, critical missing persons, or major traffic disruptions) or public posting may need to be temporarily restricted. In this event the Public Information Office will be the first point of contact, the Chief's Office will be the second point of contact.

IV. AGENCY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- 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 or potential police recruits.
- D. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- E. 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 retrievable to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- F. No information posted by the department or county designees will be deleted or hidden.
 - 1. If a correction needs to be made to a post, an update to the original post will be made to clarify or correct any erroneous information.
 - 2. This addition to the original post will include the fact that it is an update, and the date and time it is published.
 - 3. If the original post has the potential to result in legal liability for the county or department, the county attorney must be consulted on next steps.
 - 4. If the county attorney advises to delete or hide the post, this directive should be sent from the county attorney to the Chief of Police, County Public Information Director, and CCPD Public Information Office in writing and retained by CCPD.

- G. 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.
1. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to hide or remove from view obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 2. Pages shall clearly indicate that there is no expectation of privacy for any content posted or submitted for posting on these pages. All comments, posts, or other content is subject to public disclosure according to the Open Records Act (OCGA 50-18-72 (b)(2)).
 3. Pages shall clearly indicate that public posting options may be suspended during sensitive times (i.e. specific incident or investigation that may be jeopardized by public comments or actions).

V. USER RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Department personnel, if authorized by the Chief of Police, 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 express written permission.
 4. Not conduct political activities or private business.
- B. The use of department computers by department personnel to access personal social media accounts is prohibited without authorization. Department employees may use department computers to access the agency's social media sites.
- 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 without permission of the Chief of Police.
- D. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

BY ORDER OF:

Electronically signed in PowerDMS on 08/31/2020

Jeffrey M. Hadley
Chief of Police