

A. PURPOSE. To outline permissible use and responsibilities of employees who use social media.

B. GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. The Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) recognizes that many of its employees use social media for personal communication and enjoyment. In general, GRPD views social media positively, and it respects the right of the employee to use social media as a medium of self-expression. Online activities of employees could reflect negatively on the GRPD, the City of Grand Rapids (City), or the employee if the employee identifies themselves as such and/or discusses matters related to the department or the City. This policy is designed to protect GRPD and City interests, while still allowing its employees to use social media as freely as possible. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to, and including discharge.
2. The use of social media is ever-changing and will continue to evolve. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and applicable.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. Social Media: Those forms of electronic communication using websites, applications, and services on the Internet for social networking.
2. Social Networking: The use of websites, services, and applications on the Internet to facilitate user collaboration and dissemination of information including:
 - a. Social networks such as Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, and Twitter.
 - b. Video, podcasts, and photo-sharing websites and applications.
 - c. Blogs, micro-blogging, wikis, comment sections of news outlet websites, and other public forums.
 - d. Any other form of social media that may be developed or emerge in the future that facilitates the collaboration and dissemination of information via the Internet.
3. Posting: The sharing of any information via the Internet using any social media or during any social networking and includes the sharing of written statements, video files, audio files, photographs, links to another posting, or

any other communication regardless of format.

D. WORK RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Some employees, as part of their job duties and responsibilities will be authorized to create social media content on behalf of the department and the City. These employees will be notified by the Chief of Police and will receive authorization describing the content they are entitled to create and the restrictions or policies that apply to their individual circumstances.
2. Only those employees that have been authorized and assigned to the job duties of creating GRPD or City related social media or communicating within work-related social media sites are allowed to do so. Anyone that violates this shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including discharge.
3. Investigative efforts involving social media will be conducted with the authorization of the unit commander.

E. USE OF PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Employees who use social media for personal use are reminded that they are personally responsible for the content of any social media they create. An employee's personal perspectives, opinions, or postings may not cause damage to the GRPD and/or the City's interests. If social media is used:
 - a. Social media postings shall not violate any GRPD or City policies or guidelines.
 - b. Use of social media shall not violate any federal, state, or local law.
 - c. Any time an employee identifies themselves as an employee of the GRPD or the City, it must be clear that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the GRPD or the City.
 - d. Employees are not permitted to claim or imply to be speaking on behalf of the GRPD or the City.
 - e. If the employee identifies themselves as a GRPD or City employee, and are speaking or writing about GRPD or City related topics or issues, the following disclaimer must be included in a reasonably prominent place:

“The views expressed on the post are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Grand Rapids Police Department or the City of Grand Rapids.”

- f. Employees shall not disclose any confidential, evidentiary, or proprietary information concerning any resident obtained through the course of employment.
- g. Employees are encouraged to show pride in their department and profession. Pictures of employees in ceremonial, familial, award, community collaboration, or other positive events are allowed. Photos that include uniformed officers and/or departmental vehicles in settings that are embarrassing, demeaning, provocative, politically motivated, or in bad taste are not allowed. Any other exceptions are not permitted without written permission from the Chief of Police.
- h. Employees shall not harass, defame, demean, or threaten any other person or entity.
- i. Use of social media while on duty should be reserved for authorized breaks.
- j. Assume the social media posting is accessible and available to the general public and will remain available.
- k. Employees must be respectful to the department, the City, its employees, constituents, partners, affiliates, and others.
- l. Any employee contacted about a social medial posting that concerns GRPD or the City shall refer that person to a Command Officer.