

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, the GRPD views social media positively, and it respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-expression. On-line activities of employees could reflect negatively on the GRPD, City of Grand Rapids (City), or the employee in particular if 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 has rapidly developed in recent years and will certainly continue to evolve. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and applicable.

C. **SOCIAL MEDIA INCLUDES:**

1. Social networking sites, (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc.)
2. Video and photo sharing websites, (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Vine, etc.)
3. Micro-blogging sites, (e.g. Twitter)
4. Weblogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs, or blogs hosted by traditional media publications
5. Forums and discussion boards
6. Any other website that allows individuals to publish their own content or comment on content posted by others.

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 City. Employees are not permitted to claim or imply to be speaking on behalf of the GRPD or City. 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”

- d. Employees shall not disclose any confidential, evidentiary, or proprietary information of the GRPD, the City, or personal information concerning any resident obtained through the course of employment.
- e. 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.
- f. Employees shall not harass, defame, demean, or threaten any other person or entity.
- g. Use of Social Media while on duty should be reserved for authorized breaks.
- h. Assume the social media posting is accessible and available to the general public and will remain available. Employees must be respectful to the department, the City, its employees, constituents, partners, affiliates, and others.
- i. Any employee contacted about a social media posting that concerns the GRPD or City, shall refer that person to a Command Officer.