

GENERAL ORDER

G.O. 3-260

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE POLICY



DATE EFFECTIVE: September 6, 2018
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INDEX: Definitions, Work Related Usage, Personal Usage

I. PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITY:

- A. Purpose: The Monroe Police Department endorses the use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, information exchange, streamlining of processes and foster productivity. This General Order establishes the department's position on the usage of social media including management, administration and oversight. This General Order is intended to address social media in general and not a particular form of social media.
- B. Responsibility: It will be the responsibility of all officers of this Police Department to follow the procedures and to study, understand, and adhere to the rules and regulations addressed in this General Order.

II. DISCUSSION:

Social media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting the Monroe Police

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Department and personnel in meeting community outreach, problem solving, investigative procedures, crime prevention and related goals of the Monroe Police Department. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as directed by the Chief of Police. The personal use of social media can have a bearing on department personnel in their official capacity, whether it is conducted under their actual name or a pseudonym. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. BLOG: A self published commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions or comments.
- B. PAGE: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals.
- C. POST: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- D. PROFILE: Information that a user shares about himself/herself on a social networking site.
- E. 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.
- F. SOCIAL NETWORKS: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information and socialize with others using a range of techniques.
- G. SPEECH: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, writing, expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape or related forms of communication.
- H. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS: Electronic communications include, among other things, messages, images, data or any other information used in e-mail, instant messages, voice mail, fax machines, computers, personal digital assistants,

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telephones, cellular and mobile phones including those with cameras, intranet, internet, back-up storage, information on a memory or flash key or card, jump or zip drive, any other type of internal or external removable storage drives or any other technological tool. In the remainder of this policy, all of these communication devices are collectively referred to as "Systems".

- I. USER: Persons with authority to use equipment, applications and systems.

IV. POLICY:

- A. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department to have a social media policy that adheres to best practices of responsible social media usage.
- B. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department that all personnel shall follow and adhere to the rules, regulations and procedures as set forth in this general order.

V. PROCEDURES:

- A. WORK RELATED USE: The following social media department sanctioned procedures for use shall be adhered to:
 - 1. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police in accordance with the Monroe Police Department General Orders;
 - 2. Social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information displayed;
 - 3. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, rules and regulations and policies and procedures;
 - 4. Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall conduct themselves as representatives of the Monroe Police Department and shall adhere to all department standards of conduct. They shall identify themselves as members of the department, not make comments regarding the guilt or innocence of suspects or arrestees, not make comments concerning pending prosecutions and not post, transmit or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including pictures, videos,

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evidence, or other materials in the department relating to training, work assignments and enforcement efforts without the permission of the Chief of Police;

5. Department personnel shall not conduct political activities or private business on departmental social media;
6. Social media can be used for community outreach, provide crime tips, offer online reporting opportunities, sharing crime maps and data and soliciting tips about unsolved crimes. Social media may also be used for time sensitive notifications of road closures, special events, weather emergencies and missing or endangered persons.
7. The Division Commander will maintain a listing, including administrative login and password information, of all Social Media sites and/or tools which are approved for use by town officials.
8. The Division Commander or designee provided with approval to manage a Social Media tool remain responsible for monitoring and managing its content, including content posted by third parties such as the general public while adhering to our disclaimer.
 - a. Disclaimer: Welcome to the Monroe Police Department official page on Facebook. The purpose of this site is to present matters of public interest concerning the Monroe Police Department's programs, activities, news stories, and photos. We welcome your comments, however, please note this is a moderate online discussion site and not a public forum. If you need an official source of information about the Monroe Police Department please visit our website at www.monroect.org/monroepd. Comments made by the public to our page will be reviewed, and while comments will not be edited by our personnel, the Department reserves the right to remove comments that include:

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1. Comments unrelated to the purpose and total scope of the page. The page is not meant for comments that do not directly relate to the purpose or topical scope of the page;
2. Obscenity;
3. Child pornography;
4. Incitement to imminent threat;
5. Speech presenting a grave and imminent threat;
6. Fighting words;
7. True threats;
8. Fraud;
9. Defamation (libel/slander);
10. Solicitations to commit, or speech integral to, criminal conduct;
11. Promotion or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction;
12. Promotion in favor of, or in opposition to, a candidate campaigning for election to a political office;
13. Copyrighted material if posted without the copyright holders consent.

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The Department may take steps to have a comment removed if it falls within one of the foregoing categories. Also, please keep in mind that this is an internet page on facebook.com. Facebook Inc. owns and operates facebook.com and has its own policies and standards concerning what may, and may not, be posted and the actions that it may take with regard to unauthorized posts. See "Facebook Community Standards" at www.facebook.com/communitystandards/. The Department may also take steps to remove "robo spam" and/or comments by "social bots" (i.e. content posted by automatic software programs, or "bots") if necessary to ensure access for the general public. Furthermore, while we encourage debate and discussion, we respectfully request that commenters be courteous and civil toward one another. The Department is not responsible for, and neither endorses nor opposes, comments placed on this site by visitors to this site. Commenters are personally responsible for their own comments, username, and/or any information placed on this page by the commenter. Please do not report emergencies or ask for assistance on this page. For police service call 911.

- B. **PERSONAL USE:** The following social media precautions and prohibitions shall be observed and adhered to:
1. Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair the work of the department for which confidentiality is important;
 2. As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech, whether on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties - that is, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities - is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office of this department;
 3. Department personnel are cautioned that when using social media, their speech becomes part of worldwide electronic domain. As such, material that is posted online can be disclosed in court proceedings for the purpose of impeachment against the officer. The free sharing of one's thoughts and personal life on the internet may have serious and career ending consequences if that information is used to discredit a police officer's

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testimony in court;

4. Department personnel shall adhere to the Code of Conduct when representing themselves as members of the department. They shall not post obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or any protected class of individuals. Department personnel shall refrain from disparaging commentary or criticism of department policy, activities, or other personnel;
5. Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make statements, speeches, appearances or endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without authorization of the Chief of Police. Images such as official ceremonies and community service events, etc. are permissible;
6. Incidental and occasional personal use of Systems that does not interfere or conflict with productivity or official business or violate department General Orders is permitted.