

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



GENERAL ORDER

Effective Date: October 19, 2022	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amends - GO 13.1.13 (October 28, 2021)	Number: 13.1.13
Distribution: All Personnel	Review Month: November	Reviewing Authority: Undersheriff / Strategic Communications
Subject: Social Media		

This order consists of the following:

1. Purpose
2. Policy
3. Definitions
4. Procedures

1. Purpose

The purpose of this order is to outline acceptable social media guidelines for all agency personnel.

2. Policy

The agency endorses the use of secure social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the agency's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, but rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new internet tools will emerge.

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the agency and its personnel with objectives related to community outreach, problem-solving, investigations and crime prevention. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel.

The agency also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some members. The personal use of social media can have bearing on agency personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as some prohibitions on the use of social media by agency personnel. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, in accordance with GO [5.1.0](#).

3. Definitions

- A. Administrator – a person authorized by the Sheriff to establish or maintain the agency's presence on social media.
- B. 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."
- C. Page - specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by those with administrator rights.

- D. Post - content a person shares on social media or the act of publishing content on a site.
- E. Profile - information a user provides about himself or herself on social media.
- F. Social Media – a category of internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, chat rooms, dating sites, social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wiki's, blogs, and news sites.
- G. Social Networks - online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- H. Speech - Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication
- I. Wiki - Web pages(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

4. **Procedures**

A. On-the-Job use

1. Agency-Sanctioned Presence

The Sheriff may authorize designated persons ("administrators") to maintain an official social media site for the agency. The Sheriff may authorize designated persons to represent the agency on other social media.

a. Determine Strategy

- 1. Where possible, each social media page will include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's mission.
- 2. Where possible, the social media page(s) should link to www.ocso.com.

b. Procedures

- 1. All agency social media sites or pages will be approved by the Sheriff and shall only be administered by Strategic Communications or other designated agency personnel after approval by the Sheriff or his/her designee.
- 2. Where possible, social media pages will clearly indicate they are maintained by the agency and will have agency contact information prominently displayed.
- 3. Social media content will adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - a. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - b. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- 4. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the

opinions of the agency. Pages will clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the agency reserves the right to remove obscenities, off- topic comments, and personal attacks.

2. Agency-Sanctioned use

Agency personnel representing the agency via social media outlets shall:

- a. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the agency and, accordingly, shall adhere to all agency standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols.
- b. Identify themselves as a member of the agency.
- c. Unauthorized use of personally owned devices to manage the agency's social media activities is prohibited.
- d. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

B. Examples of Other Possible Uses of Social Media by the Agency

1. Social media may be a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence including but not limited to information about (e.g. missing persons, wanted persons, gang participation, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer, persons seeking employment and volunteer positions).
2. Social media may be used for community outreach and engagement by:
 - a. Providing crime prevention tips.
 - b. Offering online-reporting opportunities.
 - c. Sharing crime maps and data.
 - d. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (e.g., Crimeline).
 - e. Sharing photos of agency personnel interacting with our community.
3. Social media may be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
 - a. Road closures.
 - b. Special events.
 - c. Weather emergencies.
 - d. Missing or endangered persons.

C. Personal Use

Agency personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:

1. Agency personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this agency or negatively affect the public perception of the agency.
2. As public employees, agency personnel are cautioned that speech on or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties and responsibilities is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the agency.
3. Agency personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any sensitive information to which they have access because of their employment without written permission from the Sheriff or his or her designee.

4. Agency personnel shall not:
 - a. Make, share, comment, or indicate support of any posting that includes harassment, threats of violence, or similar conduct.
 - b. Make, share, comment, or indicate support of any posting that ridicules, maligns, disparages, expresses bias, or disrespect toward any race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or age or any other protected class of individuals.
 - c. Make, share, comment, or indicate support of any posting that suggests that agency personnel are engaged in behavior reasonably considered to be unlawful or reckless toward public safety.
5. For safety and security reasons, agency personnel should use caution when doing the following:
 - a. Display agency logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal social media pages.
 - b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as an employee of this agency. Deputies who are, or who may be reasonably expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
 - c. When using social media, agency personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain.
6. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may discredit agency personnel in criminal proceedings.
7. Agency personnel may not divulge information gained because of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent views or positions of the agency without express authorization.
8. Agency personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for:
 - a. Publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group or organization.
 - b. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and that would be offensive to a reasonable person.
 - c. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose.
 - d. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
9. Agency personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
10. Agency personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be

accessed by the agency at any time without prior notice,

11. Reporting violations – all agency personnel becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any social media page in violation of the provisions of this policy are encouraged to notify their supervisor.