



VSP-DIR-123

Social Media

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To guide general social media use by members and to establish the department's official use of general social media forums for the purposes of recruitment, public information, community outreach, and as an investigative tool.

2.0 Policy

- 2.1 Members, when utilizing social media forums in an unofficial capacity and as private citizens, shall conduct themselves in such a way as to ensure that their speech, which includes all written, spoken, or other multimedia material, does not reflect poorly on the department, impair established working relationships, breach confidentiality, impede performance of duties, violate any section of department Rules and Regulations, or negatively affect the public perception of the Vermont State Police.
- 2.2 Members are expected to adhere to the code of conduct while engaging in online social media realms and understand that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 **Blog:** short for Web log, it is a type of website or part of a website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or videos (Wikipedia, 2011).
- 3.2 **Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.
- 3.3 **Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

- 3.4 **Profile:** Information that a user provides about him/herself on a social networking site.
- 3.5 **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-integrated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube) wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, reddit).
- 3.6 **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- 3.7 **Web 2.0:** The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user generated content rather than static web pages. This is often used interchangeably with the term social media.
- 3.8 **Wiki:** Web pages that can be edited collaboratively.

4.0 Procedures -Employee Personal Use of Social Media

- 4.1 Members shall not post, transmit or otherwise disseminate any information which they have access to as a direct result of their employment, without written permission from the Director or designee.
- 4.2 Members shall not post, transmit or otherwise disseminate photographs or digital images of themselves wearing a department uniform, or with any emblem, badge or other such insignia that identifies the Vermont State Police, which are associated with materials that are deemed to be a violation of the code of conduct.
- 4.3 Under no circumstances will a member post photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition of themselves or other members who are, or may reasonably be expected to work in an undercover capacity unless it is in the performance of the duties of an undercover member.
- 4.4 Members shall not divulge information gained through their position of employment or authority, make statements, speeches or appearances or endorsements or publish materials that could reasonably be considered as representative of the views or position of the department without express authorization.

- 4.5 Members should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public or online forum can be accessed by the department at any time without notice. Privacy settings on social media sites do not ensure confidentiality of material posted.
- 4.6 The use of department computers for personal reasons by members must follow State of Vermont Human Resources Policy and Procedure.

5.0 Procedures -Department Use of Social Media Sites

- 5.1 All department social media sites shall be approved by the Director or designee and shall be administered by the department Public Information Officer. All such sites shall indicate that they are maintained by the department and shall prominently display department contact information.
- 5.2 All Social Media shall comply, where applicable, with laws, department Rules and Regulations and policy.
 - A. Content is subject to public records law.
 - B. Content must be managed, stored and retrieved in compliance with state and federal law.
- 5.3 Whenever possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate that all posted comments are monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments and personal attacks and other such comments the department deems inappropriate and/or unprofessional.
- 5.4 Social media pages will indicate that all posted material, content and submissions may be subject to public disclosure.
- 5.5 Department personnel representing the department through social media outlets shall:
 - A. Identify themselves as a member of the department;
 - B. Conduct themselves professionally and adhere to all department policies and the Code of Conduct;
 - C. Refrain from making any statements concerning cases pending prosecution;

- D. Not reflect opinion as to the guilt or innocence of any individual associated with an investigation;
 - E. Not release or otherwise disseminate confidential information or materials to include photographs or videos not specifically authorized for release; and
 - F. Not conduct political activities or private business.
- 5.6 Members shall not use personally-owned computers or devices to manage the department's social media sites or activities unless authorized by the Director.
- 5.7 Members shall abide by all copyright, trademark and service mark restrictions in posting materials through social media or electronic media.

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