

54.02-R01 SOCIAL MEDIA USE

(2/18/26) Position responsible for updates: Undersheriff
CALEA: 54.1.1

Supersedes: 1105-R01 (11/19/15)

Applies to all staff.

54.02.01 POLICY.

- A. The Washington County Sheriff's Office recognizes the use of social media as a means to further the mission, vision, and goals of the agency. Utilizing social media platforms successfully and strategically can enhance safety and security while advancing the best interests of the WCSO.
- B. Social media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting agency personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related goals. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon.
- C. The personal use of social media can have a bearing on WCSO personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the personal use of social media by WCSO personnel.

54.02.02 PURPOSE.

- A. The purpose of this policy is to establish oversight and procedures related to the utilization of social media for public information or investigative purposes, which will promote the mission of the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

54.02.03 DEFINITIONS.

Affiliation with a Hate Group: donating to, being a member of, or participating in activities, including attending meetings, social media groups, or rallies organized by or executed on behalf of a hate group.

Blog: a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer. The term is short for "Web log."

Editor: any person or persons authorized to access the areas of the Washington County Sheriff's Office Official Website or Facebook Page to make any changes to content, templates, images, or any other data contained within the WCSO information servers.

Electronic Communications: Electronic Communications include, among other things, messages, images, data or any other information used in email, instant messages, voicemail, fax machines, computers, pagers, telephones, cellular and mobile devices including those with cameras, intranet, internet, back-up storage, information on a memory or flash card, jump/USB or zip drive, any other type of internal or external removable storage drives or any other technology tool.

Hate Group: any group that advocates for violence or the commission of crimes against a group of persons based on their color, ethnicity, race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Information: any electronic data contained within the County's Website.

Page: the specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals.

Personal Social Media Account: a personal account established by a member of the service with a third-party provider (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X etc.) that is not officially affiliated with the WCSO.

Portable Electronic Device: an electronic device having the capability to store, record, and/or transmit text, images, videos, or audio data.

Post: content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: information that a user shares about themselves on a social networking site.

Social Media: a category of internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This may include, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Nextdoor); microblogging sites (X); photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube); wikis (Wikipedia); blogs; and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

54.02.04 WCSO AUTHORIZED SOCIAL MEDIA USERS.

- A. The WCSO Communications Coordinator or other staff authorized by the Public Affairs Manager, will ensure that authorized staff are given necessary access to secured social media consistent with Washington County and WCSO policies and procedures. To maintain a consistent and professional image, the WCSO Communications Coordinator will ensure that authorized users receive initial and ongoing training on WCSO standards for the design and use of each type of social media. Training will also address preapproval requirements for any social media-related budget expenditures.
- B. Authorized WCSO personnel representing the WCSO via social media outlets shall do the following:
 1. conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the WCSO and, accordingly, shall adhere to all WCSO standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum;
 2. identify themselves as a member of WCSO;
 3. make no statements of guilt or innocence of any suspect or adult in custody, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, without the express written permission of the Sheriff or their designee;
 4. not hold/conduct political activities or private business; and
 5. the use of department computers is intended for WCSO use only. The use by WCSO personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization. Employees do not have an expectation of privacy in the contents of a county owned computer.

- C. Authorized staff will use social media on behalf of WCSO for approved purposes, including but not limited to the following:
1. community outreach and engagement with crime prevention tips;
 2. online reporting;
 3. sharing of crime maps and data;
 4. solicitation of tips about unsolved crimes;
 5. time-sensitive notifications related to road closures, special events, weather emergencies, and missing or endangered persons;
 6. expansion of applicant recruitment efforts; and
 7. marketing of WCSO programs and services.
- D. This policy applies to all forms of social media used by the WCSO. Social media includes a wide variety of tools and formats; examples include, but are not limited to the following:
1. internet sites such as Facebook, X and Google Plus;
 2. business networking services, such as LinkedIn;
 3. blogs, Internet forums/message boards, and chat rooms;
 4. digital image sharing services, such as Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, SnapChat;
 5. podcasts;
 6. news media website comment threads; and/or
 7. Wikis, such as Wikipedia.
- E. WCSO personnel will not utilize social media accounts, other than official WCSO accounts registered to Washington County or Washington County Sheriff's Office to post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate sensitive law enforcement content, including photographs, to which they have direct access as a result of their employment, without the prior written approval from the Sheriff or designee.
- F. WCSO authorized social media sites must comply with Oregon Government Ethics Laws and include an approved WCSO public notice about monitoring content. Administrators of WCSO social media sites will ensure a public notice is posted to explain how content is managed. The notice must be approved by the WCSO Communications Coordinator.

54.02.05 SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY REGULATIONS.

- A. All WCSO social media sites must be maintained consistent with Oregon Public Records Law and Oregon Administrative Rules on records retention. Social media content must be maintained pursuant to Oregon Public Records Law ([ORS Chapter 192](#)) and OAR Chapter [166-150-0005](#) to [166-150-0215](#). Therefore, administrators of WCSO social media sites will ensure that each site is linked to the social media archiving service used countywide.
- B. Content is subject to public records laws, and public records requests for social media content or information will be directed to the WCSO Public Information Officer.
1. See also: WCSO policy [1102, Guidelines for Releasing Information](#); and
 2. WCSO policy [1103, Public Information Officer Responsibilities](#).
 3. WCSO reserves the right to remove comments and posts containing, but not limited to the following:
 - a. comments not directly related to the topic being discussed;
 - b. profane language;
 - c. sexually suggestive language;
 - d. personal attacks;

- e. comments that promote discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or disability;
 - f. commercial advertising; and/or
 - g. comments encouraging illegal activity.
4. When offending comments are deleted, the time, date, content, and poster's username must be recorded, and repeat offenders will be banned from commenting on WCSO pages.

C. Requests to remove social media content should be submitted to the WCSO Communications Coordinator in writing. This could include booking photographs in press releases, most wanted photos, or other content posted by the WCSO. The WCSO Communications Coordinator will make appropriate inquiries with WCSO staff to determine whether the content is to be removed. See also:

1. *Washington County Information Technology Services User Responsibilities Policy*
2. *Washington County Privacy of Protected Health Information Policy*

54.02.06 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

A. Employees of the Washington County Sheriff's Office must first formally request to use Social Media as a means of income, i.e. influencer, through various means, such as brand collaborations, sponsored content and advertising, or sales, through the Outside Employment Request process as outlined in WCSO Policy 2202 *Outside Employment* (formerly WCSO 404).

B. Precautions and Prohibitions. WCSO personnel shall abide by the Washington County [Social Media Policy](#) as well as the following when using social media;

1. WCSO personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships for which confidentiality is important;
2. does not impede the performance of assigned duties;
3. impair discipline and harmony among coworkers; or
4. negatively affect the public perception of Washington County or the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

a. Social media posts by WCSO personnel in their personal capacity can form the basis for discipline.

- 1) WCSO personnel should be mindful that speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, while accessing and communicating on any social media site, regardless if it is done while conducting official, work-related business or done for personal use, employees shall adhere to all County and WCSO standards of conduct and shall not engage in any activity or present themselves in such a manner that would be detrimental to the County or the Washington County Sheriff's Office. (*see [WCSO policy 207 General Conduct.](#)*)

b. WCSO personnel are prohibited from the following:

- 1) speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that:

- a) ridicule;
- b) malign;
- c) disparage;
- d) express bias/hate against any race, religion, or any protected class of individuals

c. Engaging in prohibited speech as noted above may create grounds for a WCSO staff member's testimony to be undermined or impeached in criminal proceedings.

WCSO personnel found to be in violation of this directive may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

- d. Personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for:
 - 1) publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
 - 2) publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
 - 3) using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitive purpose.

54.02.07 REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE POSTS/PAGES.

- A. Any WCSO employee having knowledge of a posting on, or of any website or webpage that may be in violation of this directive shall notify their immediate supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

REFERENCES

Washington County Personnel Administrative Social Media Policy
WCSO Policy 1102 Guidelines for Releasing Information
WCSO Policy 1105 Public Information Officer Responsibilities
WCSO Policy 207 General Conduct
OAR Chapter 192 Oregon Government Ethics Commission
OAR Chapter 166 Secretary of State, Archives Division
ICAP Social Media Model Polices
CALEA Network Shared Polices