

<b>CITY OF SANFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT STANDARD &amp; GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES &amp; GUIDELINES</b>		<b>ARTICLE NUMBER</b>	<b>310.00</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Department Social Media Policy		
<b>EFFECTIVE:</b>	01 July 2012		
<b>REVISED:</b>			
<b>AUTHORIZATION:</b>	G.T.Ransom, Fire Chief		

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidance to Department employees in clarifying boundaries between inappropriate and appropriate use of social media by Fire Department personnel including adhering to City Administrative Policy regarding internet use / policy.

1. A social media code of conduct shall be adhered to by all Fire Department members:
  - 1.1 When engaging in social media or social networking activities, all personnel will maintain a level of professionalism both on-duty and off-duty that is consistent with the honorable mission of our fire department.
  - 1.2 The publication of any statement, comment, imagery, or information through any medium of communication which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, or efficiency of the department is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.
  - 1.3 Members are prohibited from using Fire Department owned digital images, audio, or video (as defined in SOP article 305.00) unless authorized by the Fire Chief.
  - 1.4 Members are prohibited from using / viewing sexually explicit or illegal material.
  - 1.5 Members are prohibited from conduct that may bring discredit upon the department or members of the department.
2. No member, while speaking as a **private citizen** on a **matter of public concern** regarding the Fire Department, shall speak in such a way as to cause actual harm or disruption to the operations of the department.
3. Members of the fire department may speak on a **matter of public concern** as a **spokesperson** for the department only with permission through the chain of command.
4. The use of titles, Fire Department logos, and Fire Department owned images or identification that is contrary to the Department's / City's code of conduct is prohibited. Furthermore, the use of titles, Fire Department logos, and Fire Department owned images or identification that creates an impression in any way that the member is a spokesperson for the Sanford Fire Department is prohibited unless authorized by the Fire Chief.
5. Members are prohibited from publically discussing fire department matters that are not of a public concern unless doing so is with other employees and/or employee representatives of the collective bargaining unit(s), and is for the purpose of **engaging in concerted activities** relative to workplace issues.
6. Members shall not engage in speech that is **false, deceptive, libelous, slanderous, misleading or causes harm** to others (including speech that constitutes **hate speech or harassment**). Members shall not discuss protected or confidential matters of the department including, but not limited to :
  - 6.1 Matters that are under investigation, or
  - 6.2 Patient and employee information protected by HIPAA/medical confidentiality laws, or
  - 6.3 Personnel matters that are protected from disclosure by law, or
  - 6.4 Sensitive information specific to an incident that would potentially embarrass those members of the public or Department / City members involved or present.
7. Members are prohibited from participating in video chat in uniform or any other means that identifies them as a member of the Fire Department whether on duty or off duty unless authorized by the Fire Chief.

**End of Section 310.00**

The Orlando Fire Department acknowledges that use of technology by emergency service organizations provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization and its members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public relations purposes. As such, the Orlando Fire Department embraces the usage of instant technology to that end.

This policy establishes the Orlando Fire Department social media and instant technology use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated risks from the use of this technology where possible.

This policy applies to all employees of the Orlando Fire Department, members of the Orlando Fire Department, consultants and contractors performing business on behalf of the Orlando Fire Department.

For the purposes of this policy, the term instant technology is defined as resources including, but not limited to, instant messaging, texting, paging and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.

All Department social media pages shall be approved by the Fire Chief or his/her designees. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations and policies including the records management and retention requirements set by law and regulation.

The Internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The Orlando Fire Department and City of Orlando is not responsible for information found on these sources.

The Fire Department understands the value of such technology, but also understands the concerns and issues raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns or portrays this organization to the public in an illegal or negative manner (intentional or unintentional). Therefore, no information, videos or pictures gathered while on Orlando Fire Department business (this includes emergency calls, meetings, drills, details, trainings or anything obtained on organization property or at organization functions) may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

Under this restriction, members and employees are prohibited from disseminating or transmitting in any fashion photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical assistance. Any such transmission may violate Florida Sates Laws and/or the HIPAA privacy rights of such individuals and may result in a criminal and/or civil proceeding being commenced against members and employees violating this provision of the policy.

This policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as we are a public entity, it has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization,

its members and the public we are sworn to protect. Members and employees are advised that their speech directly or by means of instant technology either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that has a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities may not be protected speech under the First Amendment. Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Fire Department, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affects the public perception of the department may be sanctioned.

As a basic constitutional concept of law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. However, airing personal workplace grievances does not raise a matter of public concern.

- In that regard, members and employees must follow the following guidelines when discussing the Fire Department on Social media Websites:
- Do not make any disparaging or false statements or use profane language.
- Do not make any statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, sex or protected class of individual.
- Make clear that you are expressing your personal opinion and not that of the Fire Department.
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information.
- Do not violate Fire Department policies including the Code of Ethics.

- Do not display Department logos, uniforms or similar identifying items without prior written permission.
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer or employee of the Department without prior written permission.
- Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department without authorization.
  - a. Social network sites shall be used to promote the City, City services, job opportunities and City events.
  - b. City use of social media sites will comply with City Policy & Procedures 800.5, Ethics, and 808.18, Participation in Political Campaigns.
  - c. All social media sites shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the City of Orlando and shall have City of Orlando contact information available on the site.
  - d. No City employee personal e-mail addresses should be posted on these sites.
  - e. The City's website can link to the City's official

The Orlando Fire Department and the City of Orlando owns the right to all data and files in any owned computer, network, cell phone or other information system. The Orlando Fire Department also reserves the right to monitor electronic mail messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems) and their content, as well as any and all use of the Internet and of computer equipment used to create, view, or access e-mail and Internet content. Members and employees must be aware that the electronic messages sent and received using Orlando Fire Department equipment is not private

and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, release, and archiving by Chief Officers at all times. The Orlando Fire Department has the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the network or on individual computers or storage media in order to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws.

Inappropriate use of the Internet and instant technology while on Orlando Fire Department business may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination as an employee of the Orlando Fire Department. Fire Department computer equipment is to be used for fire department business and purposes in a professional and businesslike manner.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES**

*(The following is summarized from an article that appeared in Volume 16 Issue 6 of The Counsellor on June 1, 2011.)*

Fire districts and fire departments have found themselves thrust into an ever-advancing computer and information technology age that has operationally assisted fire service organizations in improving their communications capabilities and created a learning curve for management and staff that seems to never end. It seems that each time a new technology is learned and implemented the next advancement is right around the corner.

If the technology related only to communications necessary for conducting official business and computer systems were used strictly for official business, the development of policies to govern use of the technology would be simple.

However, this new technology has stretched to all aspects of public, business and personal life and the personal non-business use seems to frequently relate back to the employer and the industry the person works in. With most employees and volunteers using cellular phones, taking digital pictures, surfing the internet and participating in blogs and on social media sites, fire districts and fire departments are feeling increasing pressure to develop policies to address the use of the social media aspects of information use. Policies need to be developed that address the use of these and other forms of social media.

Purely personal use and content that occurs outside of the workplace that does not integrate materials obtained from work can be ignored. However, when the use relates back to the duties and materials available in the workplace, policies are necessary to instruct personnel on what is and is not acceptable.

While a fire district or volunteer department will not be able to control all off duty use of this technology, they are able to regulate how their equipment and materials are used and identify who will speak for the organization and who cannot. The organization will need to be prepared to disassociate itself from the actions of an employee or volunteer that acts offensively or contrary to the mission of the organization, even if regulate or discipline can be taken based upon a person's actions or the content of their speech.

Recently, some of the insurance companies that provide coverage to volunteer fire service organizations have submitted suggestions on social media policies for their client organizations. We have looked at those submittals and developed the following policy on social media and "instant technology" (defined in the policy) which we submit for your review and consideration:

### **\_\_\_\_\_ FIRE DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

*The \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District acknowledges that use of technology by emergency service organizations provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization and its members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public*

*relations purposes. As such, the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District embraces the usage of instant technology to that end.*

*This policy establishes the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District's social media and instant technology use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated risks from the use of this technology where possible.*

*This policy applies to all employees of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District, volunteer members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department, consultants and contractors performing business on behalf of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District.*

*For the purposes of this policy, the term instant technology is defined as resources including, but not limited to, instant messaging, texting, paging and social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.*

*All Department/District social media pages shall be approved by the Fire Chief/Board of Fire Commissioners or their designees. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations and policies including the records management and retention requirements set by law and regulation.*

*The Internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District is not responsible for information found on these sources.*

*The Fire District understands the value of such technology, but also understands the concerns and issues raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns or portrays this organization to the public in an illegal or negative manner (intentional or unintentional). Therefore, no information, videos or pictures gathered while on \_\_\_\_\_ Fire District/Fire Department business (this includes emergency calls, meetings, drills, details, trainings or anything obtained on organization property or at organization functions) may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire District's Public Information Officer.*

*Under this restriction, members and employees are prohibited from disseminating or transmitting in any fashion photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical assistance. Any such transmission may violate New York State Laws and/or the HIPPA privacy rights of such individuals and may result in a criminal and/or civil proceeding being commenced against members and employees violating this provision of the policy.*

*This policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as we are a public entity, it has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization, its members and the public we are sworn to protect. Members and employees are advised that their speech directly or by means of instant technology either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that has a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities may not be protected speech under the First Amendment. Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Fire Department/Fire District, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affects the public perception of the department/District may be sanctioned.*



*As a basic constitutional concept of law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. However, airing personal workplace grievances does not raise a matter of public concern.*

*In that regard, members and employees must follow the following guidelines when discussing the Fire Districts/Fire Department on Social media Websites:*

- Do not make any disparaging or false statements or use profane language.*
- Do not make any statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage or otherwise express bias against any race, religion or protected class of individual.*
- Make clear that you are expressing your personal opinion and not that of the Fire District/Fire Department.*
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information.*
- Do not violate Fire District/Fire Department policies including the Code of Ethics.*
- Do not display Department or District logos, uniforms or similar identifying items without prior written permission.*
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer or employee of the Department or District without prior written permission.*
- Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department or District without authorization.*

*The \_\_\_\_ Fire District owns the right to all data and files in any owned computer, network, cell phone or other information system. The \_\_\_\_ Fire District also reserves the right to monitor electronic mail messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems) and their content, as well as any and all use of the Internet and of computer equipment used to create, view, or access e-mail and Internet content. Members and employees must be aware that the electronic messages sent and received using \_\_\_\_ Fire District equipment are not private and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, release, and archiving by District and Department Officers at all times. The \_\_\_\_ Fire District has the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the network or on individual computers or storage media in order to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws.*

*Inappropriate use of the Internet and instant technology while on \_\_\_\_ Fire District/Fire Department business may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination as an employee of the Fire District or volunteer member of the Fire Department.*

*\_\_\_\_ Fire District/Department computer equipment is to be used for fire district/department business and purposes in a professional and businesslike manner.*