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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** |
| **SOG Number:** |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** |

**Technology and Computer Usage**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Policy:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ neither encourages nor discourages your personal participation (off duty and using personal/non-department equipment) in social media. Our goal in offering these procedures is to provide you with best practices so that, if you choose to participate, you can do so appropriately and effectively. It's important for you to know the department's expectations for virtual communications that involve department activities, issues, staff, and volunteers

**Scope:**

This applies to all organization personnel.

**Procedure:**

* While blogs, wiki and other forms of online discourse are individual interactions, please remember that to our citizens, you are always a representative of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Respect your audience and welcome feedback about your posts. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc., and show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. If your posting reflects negatively on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department (the organization as a whole or co-workers individually), by being lewd, illegal or offensive, it can become a personnel issue. Keep in mind that the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department SOPs stipulates that personal detrimental conduct, on or off duty, can be grounds for discipline or dismissal.
* Know the legal risks of participating in social media. You can be held personally legally and financially responsible for the things you say and do, including defaming a person or entity with your posts; don't use other people's writings or images without their permission; respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
* Protect your privacy and your reputation. Be mindful that what you post will be public for a long time, even if you think you've successfully removed the posting from the Internet.
* When posting about online references and original source materials, link to them directly. Remember: there is only one official website for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department. Direct public inquiries to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Departments website for information about department services, projects, programs, etc.
* To help ensure that no one mistakes your personal postings with official \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department communications, please refrain from posting videos, photographs, or other images of yourself in/with/alongside \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department property including but not limited to vehicles, uniforms/clothing, offices, etc. Members who take photographs of emergency scenes with personal photography equipment shall refrain from including identifying photographs of victims (surviving or fatal); identifying items (license plates, etc.). Any member, who photographs an emergency scene and wishes to use these photographs on a personal Web site, MUST receive permission from a chief officer prior to posting. Any items found to violate this policy will subject that member to disciplinary action per department SOG's.
* Your participation in social media during breaks at work or from work devices should be extremely limited and in accordance with these guidelines, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department’s Technology Appropriate Use Policy.
* Your personal participation in social media starts to involve the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department, let a chief officer know.
* If you believe your work should involve social media or you want to respond to a post, talk to a chief officer before doing so.
* Remember: true and complete anonymity on the Internet does not exist. Therefore, when personally blogging about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department or any issue involving the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department, you have a responsibility to identify yourself - name and, when relevant, role at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Write in the first person, and include a disclaimer that makes it clear that your postings are your own and don't necessarily represent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's positions, strategies or opinions.
* Computer resources are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department property. All electronic media and Services provided to members are the property of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Use of Electronic Media and Services May Be Monitored. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department reserves the right to monitor the use of all Electronic Media and Services and files and messages created through use of such Electronic Media and Services to ensure \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department property is used in compliance with applicable Local, State and Federal laws, this SOP and other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department policies and procedures. Such monitoring may include, but is not limited to, monitoring of Internet sites accessed by members and the printing and reading of any e-mail messages entered, left or stored in the computer systems.
* Members should have no expectation of privacy. Members should have no expectation of privacy in connection with the use of electronic media and services or in the transmission, receipt or storage of information in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department network system. Similarly, members have no expectation of privacy as i t relates to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's monitoring of Internet access. Members using e-mail and other forms of electronic communications should exercise the same care and professional demeanor in those communications as used in writing letters, memos and other paper messages. E-mail and other forms of electronic communications may be preserved or may be recoverable long after they are deleted.
* No personal (Non-Department) business may be conducted using electronic media and services. Electronic media and services covered under this SOG are to be used solely for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department -related business purposes. They may not be used for the purpose of conducting personal business, for personal gain or for furthering a member's political, religious or other personal causes. EXCEPTION: Unless prior approval by the Chief.
* Unsavory Internet "Surfing" is **prohibited**. Members shall not use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's Internet connection for visiting or downloading information from Web Sites, including, but are not limited to, those which contain discriminatory or harassing materials, pornography, nudity or foul language. Precautions to avoid virus and other data security breaches must be taken.
* Each user using the electronic media and services provided by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department is responsible for taking reasonable precautions to ensure he or she does not introduce viruses into the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department computer network. To that end, all material received on floppy disk, compact disk or other magnetic or optical medium and all material downloaded from the Internet or from other sites not a part of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department network system must be scanned for viruses. Remote members accessing the Internet through a computer attached to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department network must do so through an approved Internet firewall.
* Accessing the internet directly by modem is strictly prohibited unless the computer being used has access to a secure Virtual Private Network, remote dial controls and/or is not connecting to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's network.
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department computer equipment or any type of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department owned network devices shall be used to access or "plug in to” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's network or other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department Electronic Media and Services without specific prior approval from the Chief of department.
* Intellectual property rights of others must be respected. Each user shall respect the intellectual property rights of others when utilizing electronic media and services. Prior to any information on the Internet being copied or downloaded to a personal computer provided by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department, it is the responsibility of the user accessing the information to ensure that it is free of any copyright restrictions. Any duplication of copyrighted software, except for backup and archival purposes, may be a violation of federal, state and local law and, thus, is specifically prohibited.
* All software and hardware shall be purchased and installed by the designated member of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department. All software and hardware used by members to perform their job functions shall be purchased and installed by the department. No unapproved software is to be loaded on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department equipment. Requests for new software or hardware and its installation must be approved by a chief officer of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Illegal, inappropriate and harassing communications are prohibited. Members are prohibited from using electronic media and services to transmit, retrieve or store any communication, which is either:
	+ discriminatory or harassing in nature;
	+ derogatory to any individual or group;
	+ defamatory or threatening; or
	+ contrary to the legitimate business interests of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Misuse must be reported. Members learning of any misuse of the electronic media or services are expected to report such misuse to their captain or a chief officer of the department.
* Waste of computer resources is **prohibited**. Members may not use electronic media and services in a manner that wastes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department computer resources or is likely to cause network congestion or significantly hamper the ability of other members to access and use the system. Uses that may congest the electronic media and services include, but are not limited to, sending mass mailings or chain letters and spending excessive amounts of time on the Internet.
* Confidential information shall be protected. In using electronic media and services, members may have access to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department’s departmental information and proprietary and other confidential information. Protection of this information plays a vital role in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department's compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines and regulations. Members must not disclose this information to persons outside \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department. In addition, members should not disclose this information to other members except on a "need to know" basis, accompanied by a written statement, where feasible, that the information is confidential and being provided for the purpose of permitting a user to perform the duties of his/her job with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department properly.
* Violators are subject to discipline. Any violation of this SOG may subject a member to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of his or her employment or membership with, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
* Direct questions about this fire department or questions concerning the application of this SOG should be addressed to the chief.

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

Providence NC VFD Policy