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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** |

**Social Media**

***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:**

**Purpose:**

To establish Standard Operating Guidelines for using social media hardware and software in a manner consistent with the best interest of the organization.

Statistics indicate approximately two of every three Americans visit social media networks online. Facebook alone boasts more than 900 Million account holders worldwide. Average Facebook users add 90 pieces of content per month to their personal profile; are tied to more than 130 “friends” on their account; and 50 percent log in on a daily basis. Coupled with Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media it is necessary to manage the posting and transmission of information on these sites.

**Procedure:**

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The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) maintains a website and Facebook page for the purpose of communicating key organizational information about our organization to the general public.

In addition, volunteers (members) are joining social media networks and Web sites at a rapid pace. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, personal Web pages and blogs are only a few of the current social media resources that are tapped frequently. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ members’ usage, written content, as well as photographic and video-based images on their personal social media sites, as well as on fire company sites can create a multitude of problems as individuals and as an organization.

As such, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ may have an interest with their members’ social media communications that are considered a breach of confidential information, inappropriate, offensive, unprofessional, disparaging, defamatory, discriminatory or harassing. Among other risks, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ could be held liable for its members’ postings on their personal social media networking sites.

An inherent conflict regarding social media is an individual’s reasonable expectation of privacy or confidentiality when the content (written text, pictures or videos) is being disseminated on the World Wide Web. Any person posting a video on YouTube, for example, is essentially the owner of his or her own international Internet distribution center or “television” station. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ member’s social media content could be distributed for “the world to see” even when it’s not the intention. An email, Facebook post, photograph, blog or video, could be passed along to an endless number of recipients.

While individuals may attempt to limit who has access to their social media sites or communications, these communications frequently land in the hands of unintended recipients. Inappropriate, offensive or personal communications have been called to the attention of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ leaders who are left to determine what actions, if any, could or should be taken against the members who authored the written content or posted the pictures or videos.

When such incidents occur, a variety of different factors will be taken into consideration when assessing the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ interest in objecting to members’ social media usage:

On \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ time or within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ facilities – \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has a vested interest in what behavior or activities its members are engaged in while “on the clock” within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ facilities or otherwise engaged in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-related activities. Members should be cognizant of their inappropriate usage of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-owned telephones, computers or other devices to communicate offensive, intimidating, discriminatory, harassing or other unprofessional social media content. Members may be disciplined even when using their own personal laptop computer or Smartphone while on duty, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ property or otherwise engaged in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-related business. Members may post pictures, videos or written text on their personal social media site while off-duty. However, it is crucial members understand that postings made on their own time, from their own computer or Smartphone, and while off \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ property can still harm the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, its members and the community served. Under a variety of circumstances, these off-duty communications can be tied directly to business-related activities, personal or professional reputation within the community or co-worker relationships.

ESO-related information – Members of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ may use their personal social media networks to discuss \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-related business information and could violate confidentiality laws and/or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ policies. Members may communicate sensitive or confidential information about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ financial, operational and personnel functions. Similarly, social media sites may contain medical or personal information about citizens served by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Co-workers as subjects of postings – Problems result when a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ member posts information, allegations, pictures or videos about co-workers that could be considered harmful to that individual. For instance, a member can post disparaging allegations that are harassing or discriminatory in nature against co-workers. Again, it may be irrelevant if the offending party posts such information while on or off-duty.

Based upon the aforementioned issues which pose challenges to effective management of and protection of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, this guideline shall apply to determine what constitutes a conflict and related social media offense for review by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ leadership.

1. Inappropriate usage of ESO time or equipment (i.e. computers) or is otherwise detrimental to productivity, morale, work culture or the mission and purpose of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Conduct unbecoming of a member/Code of Conduct – The emergency services industry relies heavily on the public trusting in the integrity and professionalism of its members. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has instituted policies that allow members to be disciplined for behavior on or off duty that reflects poorly on the integrity and professionalism of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and its membership.

3. Breach of confidentiality or unauthorized communications regarding private business-related information. This may include financial information, operational data, sensitive personnel matters or even photos or videos taken at emergency scenes.

4. Misuse or misrepresentation of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s name or business. For their personal social media site, members may “copy and paste” the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s logo and consequently violate copyright or trademark laws or protections, with permission of the President and Chief.

5. “Representing” the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ – An individual’s social media site may indicate he or she is a member of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The member must understand that representations made by that person on the social Web site could be misperceived as representing the views of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and act accordingly.

6. Members review and sign the acknowledgement and sign-off page of this policy, indicating an understanding of the parameters of the electronic communications systems (including social media) policy. This includes the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s ability to monitor their usage while on duty, within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ facilities or while engaging in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-related activities.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is Implementing this policy that bans members’ usage of social media networks is most likely unrealistic and will be perceived as overreaching by membership, and instead, focus on a policy that is grounded in common sense and places reasonable restrictions on content and usage.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINE STATEMENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_- have reviewed the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Social Media Standard Operating Guideline, \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ and understand the document’s content and agree to comply with the requirements of the SOG. I understand that failure to comply may result in actions, consistent with the progressive discipline guidelines of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date

***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:**

King of Prussia FD, 2012