

MONROE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

General Order

CHAPTER: 009 - A		TITLE: Conditions and Benefits of Work-Personal Web Pages/Sites
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REFERENCE: CFA 32.05		RESCINDS: Special Order: Personal Web Pages/Sites, 08.23.2006
 Sheriff of Monroe County		

PURPOSE: The purpose of this General Order is to establish standards of conduct for Internet use, personal web pages, and/or sites with references to the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), agency activities, or personal use of professionally gained information.

DISCUSSION:

This procedure applies to the use of social networking websites, both on and off duty, and explicitly includes postings made at home and/or using personal Internet devices. The intent of this procedure is to ensure members use appropriate discretion in their use of references to this Agency and the actions taken by the member in his or her official capacity are governed as such to not discredit themselves or the agency and to provide guidelines covering situations of actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Professionalism, ethics and integrity are of paramount importance in the law enforcement community. Members are reminded that their conduct both on and off duty must meet a high standard.

POLICY:

This policy is necessary to ensure public confidence in the Sheriff's Office and its employees.

This policy applies to all Sheriff's Office employees

DEFINITIONS:

Blog – A personal online journal consisting of commentary, opinion, description of events, or other material such as graphics or video that is periodically updated and is intended and accessible for general and public viewing.

Chat Room – An online gathering website; accessible to the general public wherein communication is conducted with others in the chat room and is visible to other participants. The term can mean any technology from real-time chat over instant messaging to fully immersive graphical environments.

Personal Website – An online website accessible to the general public; created, configured, or contracted by an individual for social, entertainment or commentary purposes.

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

Profile – Information that a user provides about themselves on a social networking site.

Social Media – A variety of online sources that allows people to communicate; share information, photos and video and audio files; exchange text and other multimedia files with others through some form of online or cellular network platform.

Social Networking Site – An online website accessible to the general public which enables users to create profiles within the website and form relationships with other users of the same website who access their profile. Social networking sites can be used to describe community based websites, online discussions, forums, chat rooms, and other social spaces online or by cell phone. Examples of social networking websites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Vine, Instagram, and all other sites that allow users to post personal blogs. The absence of, or lack of reference to a specific website does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

Website – Any computerized document, file or menu accessible on the internet and/or World Wide Web.

PROCEDURE:

- Agency Managed Social Media:
 - All agency social media sites shall be approved by the Sheriff or designee and shall be administered by the Public Information Officer (PIO), or other designated member, as determined by the PIO.

- Social media pages shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the agency and shall have agency contact information displayed.
- Where possible, social media pages in which the agency participates should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the agency.
- Agency administered social media pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the agency reserves the right to remove any comment for any reason. Pages shall clearly indicate that any comments posted or submitted for posting, are subject to public disclosure and criminal investigation, if applicable.
- Members representing the agency, via agency-owned social media outlets, shall identify themselves as a member of the agency and shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the agency and shall adhere to all applicable written directives.
- Members shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark and service mark restrictions.
- Social media content is public record as defined in Florida Statute Chapter 119, and thus subject to the exemptions identified in F.S. 119 and retention according to State of Florida Records Retention Schedules. Members who administer and/or utilize agency social media shall ensure that no exempt information or documents are released and that social media content is retained for the required time period. State of Florida Records Retention Schedules and Exemption information is available to all members on the agency Intranet.
- Members shall not utilize agency managed social media outlets to:
 - Comment about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee or comment concerning pending prosecution(s), unless approved by the Sheriff or PIO;
 - Post, transmit or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to agency training, activities or work-related assignments, unless approved by the Sheriff or PIO;
 - Conduct political activities, endorse private businesses or specific commercial products, unless approved by the Sheriff or PIO; or
 - Use personally owned devices to manage the agency's social media activities, unless approved by the Sheriff.

- Social Media information collected during criminal investigations will be documented in the investigative case file. Those records will be retained in accordance with Florida Statute Chapter 119.
- Social Media information gathered as criminal intelligence will be documented in criminal intelligence files. Those records will be retained in accordance with 28 Code of Federal Regulations Part 23 and Florida Statute Chapter 119.
- Guidelines and Prohibited Activity for Personal Social Media and Websites:
 - The Sheriff's Office has a duty to protect the reputation and integrity of the agency and its members, as well as guard against liability and potential legal risk. The Sheriff's Office reserves the right to monitor social media.
 - Members are not prohibited from using social media for personal use; however, when members use social media, they are impacting their personal image and potentially affecting the MCSO adversely.
 - Members should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet postings, such as future employment, cross-examination in criminal cases, and public as well as private embarrassment.
 - The following rules apply when using social media:
 - Members shall not post the MCSO badge, uniform, patch, equipment, marked/unmarked vehicle, or any other symbol or representation of the Sheriff's Office in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character or may negatively affect the public's perception of the agency.
 - Members assigned to undercover operations shall not post any form of visual or personal identification which may compromise agency operations.
 - Posting or disseminating the following types of criminal justice information is explicitly prohibited: confidential, sensitive, or copyrighted information, data from an ongoing criminal or administrative investigation including photographs, videos or audio recordings, photographs of suspects, crime scenes, traffic crashes, arrestees or evidence, information concerning restricted areas of agency facilities, official training and work-related assignments, personal statements about an on-duty use of force incident, and comments related to pending prosecutions. These restrictions will not apply to official websites operated and maintained by the Sheriff's Office.

- Members will not post or disseminate content that is inconsistent with the duties and responsibilities of a Sheriff's Office member or that could be reasonably interpreted as having an adverse effect upon agency morale, discipline, operations, safety of staff or perception of the public. For example, unprofessional, unbecoming, illegal, unethical, sexual, violent, harassing, racist or sexist comments, pictures, artwork, videos, material or other such references all tend to undermine the public trust and confidence required by members of the Sheriff's Office.
 - Any statements or material regarding the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, its operations or its current or former employees that are obscene, defamatory, false, deceptive, misleading, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing or abusive are prohibited.
 - If a member chooses to reveal his/her connection with the Sheriff's Office, he/she must be clear that any information, statements, views, and/or opinions are solely that of the individual and not of the Sheriff's Office. While using social media, members are prohibited from acting, speaking or writing in an official capacity as a member or from representing that they are acting or speaking on behalf of the Sheriff's Office. They are also prohibited from representing or presenting the interests of the Sheriff's Office.
- Members of the agency are privy to information and knowledge not readily available to the general public and will comply with the following:
 - Members should consider the status of their personal knowledge of area criminal activity, community and agency members and other information which may or may not have a confidential aspect to it but was gained in their professional capacity.
 - Such information is to be protected and will not be shared except on a professional level and in an appropriate context. Appropriate context does not include the posting on websites or chat rooms, discussion with non-agency personnel or with agency personnel in a non-professional manner (i.e., jokingly in an off-duty social environment).
 - During an administrative investigation, members may be ordered to provide the agency with access to social networking sites when the subject of the complaint is directly, narrowly and specifically related to a member's performance or ability to perform his or her function within the operation or when the subject in the complaint is potentially adverse to the operation, morale and efficiency of the agency.

- Authorized exceptions to the above guidelines may be permitted by the Sheriff or designee for operational needs of the agency to include official websites operated and maintained by the Sheriff's Office. Clarification on appropriate content, if needed, will be directed to the member's supervisor.

Authorized Use of Social Media Sites

Only those employees whose job function entails the use of social media sites shall be approved for use while on duty.

Violation – Failure to comply with the above guidelines may result in disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination.