



## Boynton Beach Police Department

# SOCIAL MEDIA

	<b>Administrative Procedure:</b>	2421	
	<b>Scope:</b>	All Members	
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	<b>Proponent Unit:</b>	Office of the Chief	
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<b>Michael G. Gregory Chief of Police</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">The original signed copy of this directive is on file in the Professional Standards Office</div>		

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## I. PURPOSE

The department endorses the regulated use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange with the public and other agencies. It also aids in streamlining processes within the department and fosters productivity. This policy establishes the department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides direction on its management, use, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

## II. POLICY

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as some prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

## III. DEFINITIONS

*Blog:* A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

*Page:* The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

*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 himself or herself on a social networking site.

*Social Media:* A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter), microblogging sites (i.e. Tumblr), photo and video sharing sites (i.e. Flickr, YouTube), wikis (i.e. Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (i.e. 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.

*Web 2.0:* The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

*Wiki*: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

#### **IV. USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE DEPARTMENT**

- A. Social media is a valuable investigative tool and may be used for seeking evidence or information.
- B. Social media can be used for community outreach.
- C. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications.
- D. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.

#### **V. PERSONAL USE**

##### **A. Precautions and Prohibitions:**

Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

1. Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this department, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.
2. As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on duty or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties—that is, that owes its existence to the employee’s professional duties and responsibilities—may form the basis for discipline. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and this department.
3. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information, images or videos to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the Chief of Police or designee.
4. For safety and security reasons, department personnel must receive training and approval from the Office of Media Relations prior to disclosing their employment with this department, displaying department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on social media or personal web pages, and posting personal photographs that may cause them to be identified as members of this police department.
  - a. Officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
5. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the department’s code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
  - a. Speech, to include, graphics, memes, images and videos, containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, gender identification, religion, sexual preference or any protected class of individuals.
  - b. Speech, to include, graphics, memes, images, videos and conduct, involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
6. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer’s testimony in criminal proceedings and may result in discipline up to and including termination.
7. Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without express authorization.
8. Department personnel may not offer personal opinions on the guilt or innocence of anyone arrested by the agency; or the merits of a case.

9. Department personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
10. Department personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.
11. Reporting violations: Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action. The supervisor shall notify the Office of Internal Affairs.

B. Access/Uses of Departmental Computers and Phones:

1. Improper use or unauthorized access of agency computers, phones, systems or networks, whether on-duty or off-duty, or any non-agency computer when acting as a representative of the agency, subjects the user to disciplinary measures. Improper use includes, but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Commercial activities, ventures and/or profit-making purposes;
  - b. Creating, displaying, viewing, retrieving, or transmitting threatening, racist, sexist, sexually explicit or suggestive, obscene or harassing language or materials, except when done with command level approval for bona-fide law enforcement purposes such as covert investigatory operations;
  - c. Game playing using an internet based application or other software program;
  - d. Copyright and licensing violations;
  - e. Violation of personal privacy;
  - f. Vandalism and mischief that incapacitates, compromises, or destroys agency resources and/or violates federal and/or state laws;
  - g. Watching media solely for entertainment;
  - h. Using e-mail and instant message systems to create offensive or disruptive messages. Any message containing sexual content, racial slurs or bias, gender related bias comments, or any other comment that offensively addresses someone's age, sexual preference, gender identification, religious beliefs, national origin, or disability are considered offensive and subjects the member to discipline;
  - i. Using e-mail and instant message systems to facilitate commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations, or other non-job-related solicitations;
  - j. Creating, forwarding, or perpetuating chain messages. The PD Technical Service Unit will be notified of any computer virus warnings.
  - k. Members are prohibited from using any social media or social networking platform while on duty, unless permission is granted for investigative or public information purposes.