



HOLDEN FIRE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1.18 – Social Media

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to members to clarify the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate use of social media by fire department personnel. Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict a member's right to discuss as a private citizen, matters of public concern, nor engage in concerted activity with co-workers.

General:

Social media use in the emergency services provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization as well as all members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public relations purposes. As such, the Holden Fire Department embraces the usage of social media to that end. We define social media as resources including but not limited to instant messaging, texting, paging and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and any other information sharing services, websites or blogs. The internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of controversial nature. The Holden Fire Department does not encourage the use of these sites, and is not responsible for information found on these sources other than sites operated officially by the Holden Fire Department.

Members of the department have an affirmative obligation to avoid being perceived as a spokesperson for the department. Engaging in social media and social networking activities is a form of speech.

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 operation of the department.

Members may speak on a matter of public concern as a spokesperson for the department only with permission from the Chief. Members shall at all times exercise diligence to avoid holding themselves out as a spokesperson for the department except when duly authorized.

The use of titles, fire department logos, and fire department owned images, or identification as a member of the department that creates an impression that the member is a spokesperson for the department is prohibited. This does not include listing your occupation or department on a social media site when it is posed as a statement or answering a question.

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, and is for the purpose of engaging in concerted activities relative to workplace issues.



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Members shall not engage in speech that is false, deceptive, libelous, slanderous, misleading or cause harm to others, including speech that constitutes hate speech, or harassment; nor shall members discuss protected or confidential matters of the department, including:

- Matters that are under investigation.
- Patient and employee information protected by HIPAA/medical confidentiality laws or state privacy laws.
- Personnel matters that are protected from disclosure by law.

When engaging in social media or social networking activities, all members will maintain a level of professionalism in both on duty and off duty conduct that is consistent with the honorable mission of our department. The publication of any statement, comment, imagery, or information through any medium of communication indicated herein, which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, image or efficiency of this department, will be deemed to be a violation of this policy.

Members will not be able to post or release:

- Department owned digital images, audio or video without approval of the Chief and in accordance with the Technology Use and Digital Imagery policy.
- Sexually explicit or illegal material.
- Conduct that may bring discredit upon the department or other members.

With the exception of video chatting, members will be allowed to use social media or social networking sites while on duty in the stations providing all other duties and house work has been completed for the day.

Members will not be allowed to video chat in uniform or other identifiable clothing or location that identifies them as a member of this department whether on or off duty without the expressed written permission of the Chief.

Participating in social networking sites while enroute to or on the scene of an emergency is prohibited.

This regulation is not intended to limit member's right to free 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.

Developed: 08/15

Revision: 09/17

Reviewed: 03/19, 05/19, 07/22

I, _____ have read and understand the Holden Fire Departments Social Media Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____