

<b>PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT MANUAL OF GENERAL ORDERS</b>			
<b>General Order: 17.05</b>	<b>Effective: 11/11/2019</b>	<b>Supersedes: NEW</b>	<b>Number of Pages: 4</b>
<b>PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE: SOCIAL MEDIA</b>			

The use of social media by law enforcement agencies has proven to be effective with building public trust and enhancing community engagement efforts. The Prince William County Police Department remains committed to keeping the lines of communication open with our community. The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures for the use of any official Police Department account on authorized social media platforms.

#### A. Policy

1. For the purposes of this General Order, the term “social media” is defined as any form of online communication or publication that allows for multi-directional interaction. Social media includes blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networks, photo- and video-sharing websites, crowdsourcing, and new technologies as they evolve. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Bebo, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Google news, Yahoo news).
2. The Public Information Office (PIO) shall maintain the primary responsibility and management of all social media accounts that represent the Police Department in an official capacity except for those accounts maintained by the Prince William County Animal Shelter, Community Engagement Section, and Police Personnel Bureau. Those accounts will be managed by their respective staff with oversight from PIO staff. The Chief of Police and Deputy Chief of Police will be granted access as requested.
  - a. The PIO supervisor and Social Media Specialist will ultimately maintain the primary administrator role over the Police Department’s social media platforms. Additional PIO staff will have access to the accounts as needed to perform their duties.
  - b. Any changes to the social media platform’s privacy or account settings must be approved by the PIO supervisor, including but not limited to: the changing of passwords, usernames, official information, or user access levels.
3. In accordance with the County’s Social Media Policy, the Police Department shall contact the County Communications Office and seek written approval from the County Executive (CXO) for any new social media platform.
  - a. The Police Department must state the justification for the social media platform by outlining its needs and goals in a memo drafted from the Chief of Police to the CXO through the Director of County Communications.

- b. The Police Department shall ensure all platforms officially used by the Police Department will maintain consistency with overall communications initiatives and adhere to the agency's mission and values.

#### B. Social Media Profiles

1. Social media accounts used by the Police Department should, where applicable, clearly indicate that the platform is the official account of the Prince William County Police Department, and include:
  - a. The Police Department's contact information, including phone number and email.
  - b. A notation to indicate that the social media platform is not routinely monitored 24-hours a day, weekends, or afterhours.
  - c. An introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Police Department's presence on the platform.
2. Social media accounts should remain consistent in displaying a common profile photo (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) or channel icon (YouTube). This photo represents the brand of the agency as it is predominantly displayed on the social media page throughout the platform. This photo will not be changed unless approved by the PIO supervisor. Cover photos (Facebook), header photos (Twitter) or channel art (YouTube) may be changed without restrictions if deemed appropriate for use. These images, where applicable, can be used, for example, to promote Department events or campaigns, honor fallen officers, highlight accomplishments, celebrate milestones or display police encounters with our community.

#### C. Social Media Considerations

1. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies. Content posted on the respective social media platform may be subject to public records laws. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved in a way to comply with applicable laws and Police Department practices and policies.
2. Social media pages are designed to be public communication tools. The Police Department recognizes the public's right to free speech. Opinions expressed by visitors to any of the Police Department's official social media platforms do not reflect the opinions of the agency. Social media platforms should be routinely monitored for content on a reasonable basis.

#### D. Social Media Public Policy

1. As a standing practice, the Police Department shall reserve the right to delete or otherwise hide from public view any submissions, posts, comments, or messages that contain:
  - a. Vulgar language, whether implied or otherwise stated; including graphic, obscene, explicit, racist or sexist comments.

- b. Personal attacks of any kind.
  - c. Abusive, hateful or slanderous comments, whether implied or otherwise stated, regarding any person, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, organization or nation.
  - d. Spam.
  - e. Comments that suggest, endorse or encourage illegal activity.
  - f. Promotion, solicitation or advertisement of particular services, products or political organizations.
  - g. Infringement of copyrights or trademarks.
  - h. Personally identifiable or sensitive information, including medical information.
2. If any publicly viewed content violates the aforementioned policy, the PIO supervisor shall be notified and will make the decision on whether the content is deleted, hidden from view or otherwise removed.
- a. Before any content is removed a screenshot or other record of the post, comment, or message shall be saved for retention purposes.
  - b. The PIO supervisor will also make any decisions regarding whether an individual is blocked from official Police Department social media platforms.

#### E. PIO Staff General Guidance

1. PIO staff should, when reasonably possible, respond to public comments or posts and private messages promptly during regular office hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Discretionary responses are permitted, when necessary, afterhours, on weekends, and major holidays when the office is closed.
2. PIO staff should ensure certain incidents are posted on social media platforms as soon as possible. These incidents include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Incidents of public safety or concern.
  - b. Violent, random felonies (i.e. shootings, stranger sexual assaults, etc.).
  - c. Extended closures on major roadways.
  - d. Significant weather emergencies.
  - e. Missing and endangered persons.

3. Comments, posts, and private messages containing sensitive information should be brought to the attention of the PIO supervisor as soon as possible. The Social Media Specialist will draft a response for approval by the PIO supervisor.
4. Public comments or posts and private messages containing officer compliments or complaints will be referred to the officer's direct supervisor for review and action. The PIO supervisor will be advised of any officer-related complaints. The Chief's Office will also be copied on member compliments for documentation purposes.

#### F. Third-Party Social Media Requests

1. The Police Department will refrain from any public postings, references, or private messages showing political support or endorsement to any candidate on any official Police Department social media platform. Endorsements include those from local, state or federal elections regardless of the political position.
2. Any third-party content shall be vetted for authenticity before the information is posted on any official Police Department social media platform. The organization shall be in good standing and a credible source of the information in question. Government agencies (.gov websites), such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Agency, are considered subject matter experts and any information shared by those respective agencies is considered vetted.
3. Any third-party events can be shared on official Police Department social media platforms at the discretion of the PIO supervisor if it is determined the agency is involved or sponsoring the event. These events can include, but are not limited to: Santa Cops, Special Olympics events, National Night Out, Turkey Trot, recruitment events, panel discussions, community forums, events of other law enforcement or County agency, etc. The PIO supervisor will determine if the event meets the approved criteria before the event is posted or shared on an official social media platform.