



**Maryland-National Capital Park Police  
Prince George's County Division**



**DIVISION DIRECTIVE**

TITLE <b>SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY</b>		PROCEDURE NUMBER <b>PG325.00</b>	
SECTION <b>Duties and Responsibilities</b>	DISTRIBUTION <b>A</b>	EFFECTIVE DATE <b>01/01/17</b>	REVIEW DATE <b>05/01/21</b>
REPLACES <b>New Directive</b>			
RELATED DIRECTIVES	REFERENCES	AUTHORITY  <i>S.R. Johnson</i> <b>Chief Stanley R Johnson</b>	

**I. PURPOSE**

The Maryland-National Capital Park Police endorses the use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange: streamline processes: and foster productivity. This policy establishes the department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, 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. DEFINITIONS**

- A. 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".
- B. Page - The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- C. Profile - Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

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- D. Social Media – A category of digital communication platforms that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, blogs and news sites. Some examples of social media include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, and Tumblr.
- E. Social Networks – Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- F. Speech – Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

### **III. DEPARTMENT PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 1. The Chief of Police approves official department social media accounts.
- 2. The Public Information Officer will oversee all official department social media accounts.
- 3. The department will clearly identify its official social media accounts and have contact information prominently displayed.
- 4. Investigative units may use non-official social media accounts with written permission from the Chief of Police.
- 5. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
- 6. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department.
- 7. Pages shall clearly indicate that comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. And, content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

### **IV. DEPARTMENTAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 1. Personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
  - a. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  - b. Identify themselves as a member of the department.
  - c. Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecution, nor pass, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
  - d. Not conduct political activities or private business.
  - e. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

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2. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
  - a. Missing Persons
  - b. Wanted Persons
  - c. Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking)
  - d. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer
3. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
  - a. Providing crime prevention tips
  - b. Offering online-reporting opportunities
  - c. Sharing crime maps date
  - d. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes
4. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to road closures, special events, weather emergencies and missing/endangered persons.

## **V. EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The department recognizes the role that social media plays in the personal lives of some department employees. However, the personal use of social media can have bearing on employees in their official capacity as they are held to a high standard by the community.

Engaging in prohibited speech outlined in this policy may provide grounds for discipline and may be used to undermine or impeach an officer's testimony in legal proceedings.

1. Employees Shall Not Post Speech That Negatively Impacts the Department's Ability to Serve the Public
  - a. Employees may express themselves as private citizens on social media sites as long as employees do not:
    1. Make, share, or comment in support of any posting that includes harassment, threats of violence, or similar conduct.
    2. Make, share, or comment in support of any posting that ridicules, maligns, disparages, expresses bias, or disrespect toward any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class of individuals.
    3. Make, share, or comment in support of any posting that suggests that Department personnel are engaged in behavior reasonably considered to be unlawful or reckless toward public safety.
    4. Otherwise violate any law or Park Police policy.
    5. Engaging in speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer's testimony in criminal proceedings. Department personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination.

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6. Employees shall make reasonable efforts to remove content appearing on their social media account that violates this policy upon learning of the offensive content.
7. Employees may not use their departmental email address to register for a personal account on social media.

2. Employees May Not Post Privileged Information or Represent the Department

- a. Employees shall not post or otherwise disseminate any confidential information they have access to as a result of their employment with the Department.
- b. Employees may not make any statements, appearances, endorsements, or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department. (Exception for those authorized to do so)
- c. Employees who violate the provisions of this policy may be subject to discipline.

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