

	<b>ELGIN POLICE DEPARTMENT</b> 151 Douglas Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120	
<b>Effective Date:</b> 11/26/13	<b>STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE</b>	<b>Revised Date:</b> 12/20/16
<b>Chief of Police:</b> 	Social Media, 16.3	
<b>Cross Reference:</b> State of Illinois Record retention guidelines City of Elgin Personnel Manual, Section 6.15, Computer Policy		<b>Policy Sections:</b> 16.3.1 Department Use of Social Media 16.3.2 Off-Duty Use of Social Media 16.3.3 Internal Blog/Instant Messaging/E-Mail

## PURPOSE

The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, information exchange, streamline processes and to 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.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Social media provides a means of assisting the department in meeting community outreach, problem solving, investigative, crime prevention, time sensitive notifications, 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 department personnel. The personal use of social media can have a bearing on department personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature, as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by personnel.

## DEFINITIONS

**Social Media:** A category of internet based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation. Examples of social networks include, but are not limited to the following: Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Nixle, Flickr and YouTube.

**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.

## PROCEDURES

### 16.3.1 DEPARTMENT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief of police or designee and shall be administered by personnel as assigned by the chief of police. Social media sites or pages shall adhere to the following provisions:
  1. Include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the department's presence on the website.
  2. Clearly indicate that they are maintained by the department and shall depict department contact information.

3. Link to the department's official website.
  4. State that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department.
  5. Clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, personal attacks and other inappropriate or inflammatory remarks.
  6. Clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- B. The Office of the Secretary of State administers the Illinois Records Retention Act and established following recommendations as it relates to social media postings:
1. Postings used to re-broadcast existing information are bulletin boards containing reference copies of information. These postings do not qualify as records, as defined by the Local Records Act, and may be removed from posting at the discretion of the department. The original public record pertaining to the posting may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.
  2. Postings used to engage in conversation with the public, such as answering specific questions or informing the public about an emergency situation, may qualify as records when the information does not pertain to an existing record. These postings are subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply and the content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with the open records law, e-discovery laws and policies.
- C. Only persons designated by the chief of police shall publish official department related content on social media sites.
- D. Personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall ensure the following:
1. Conduct themselves, at all times, as representatives of the department and shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  2. Refrain from making statements concerning the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work related assignments without express written permission.
  3. Refrain from taking an official position of the department on an issue without approval from the chief of police.
  4. Refrain from conducting political activities or private business.

#### **16.3.2 OFF-DUTY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- A. Personnel who choose to maintain or participate in websites, social media or social networking platforms, while off-duty, shall conduct themselves with professionalism and in such a manner that will not negatively reflect on the department or its mission. Personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships within the department; impede the performance of duties; create disharmony amongst co-workers; or negatively affect the public's perception of the department. Personnel shall be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain even when privacy safeguards are put in place.

- B. Personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their “office” and the department. Personnel are cautioned that off duty speech may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. The following forms of speech are prohibited:
  - 1. Obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, criticize, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
  - 2. Involving themselves or other personnel in a manner that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
  - 3. False statements about the department or personnel.
- C. Engaging in prohibited speech 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 from office.
- D. For safety and security reasons, department personnel are cautioned not to publish photos of themselves or family members in department uniforms or patches. Personnel shall not:
  - 1. Use the department patch, uniform or departmental reference for any purpose, in any manner which is detrimental to the department’s reputation, or in any manner which purports the official sanction, sponsorship or authority of the department.
  - 2. Post, transmit or disseminate any pictures or videos of official department training, activities or work related assignments that would compromise an on-going investigation or show confidential activities.

#### **16.3.3 INTERNAL BLOG/INSTANT MESSAGING/E-MAIL**

- A. The department recognizes the importance of streamlining the sharing of information. The department’s internal blog, instant messaging (IM) and e-mail systems were implemented to facilitate the flow of information.
- B. In using these internal communications systems, department personnel shall conform to the procedures established in section 16.3.1 of this policy and adhere to the following:
  - 1. Use good judgment before commenting on someone’s post. Do not post malicious or mean-spirited remarks about people or co-workers.
  - 2. All posts, comments and information are releasable under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Keep in mind how a post or comment might be viewed by the Elgin community or general public before posting.
  - 3. These systems are not designed to replace communication between supervisors and employees. Communication between supervisors and employees shall continue in the same manner.
  - 4. Keep comments respectful and professional.
  - 5. Ensure proper attribution before publishing.
- C. Personnel shall use caution before putting out department wide e-mails or other communications. Members shall ensure that department wide e-mails are truly needed and rise to the level of importance to be sent out to all personnel. No members of the department shall send out a department wide email that represents a policy or position of the department without the approval of the chief of police.
- D. In addition to this policy, members of the department shall abide by the city policy on email and computer usage.