



Monroe Fire Department

Standard Operating Guidelines Social Media & Photography Policy

Purpose: The fire department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity with its employees. This policy establishes this fire and EMS department's position on the use and management of social media and provides guidelines on the management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general in general terms as technology will outpace our ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

Level of Performance: Photographs and social media provides a valuable means of assisting the fire department and its personnel in meeting community education, community information, fire prevention, and other related organizational and community objectives. This policy identifies possible uses that may be evaluated and utilized as deemed necessary by fire administrative and supervisory personnel. This department also recognizes the role that photography and social media tools may play in the personal lives of department personnel. The personal use of photographs or social media can have an effect on fire departmental personnel in their official capacity as firefighters. This policy is a means to provide guidance of a precautionary nature as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of photography and social media by department personnel.

Special Note: *This policy is in addition and addendum to; the City of Monroe Social Media, Electronic Communication and Information Systems, Open Records and Use of City Equipment policies as included in the City Employee Manual (attached as Section 7.0002). In case of conflict with city policies, the most restrictive tenants of each policy will be applied.*

Definitions

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.

Digital Image: The creation of digital images, typically from a physical scene. The term is often assumed to imply or include the processing, compression, storage, printing, and display of such images. The most usual method is by digital photography with a digital camera but other methods are also employed.

Image: For the purpose of this policy the term image refers to any digital, analog, video other type of images as may be employed.

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.

Photograph: An image, especially a positive print, recorded by exposing a photosensitive surface to light, especially in a camera.

Social Media: A category of Internet-based resources that enable the user to generate content and encourage other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites:

Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, and other sites. (There are thousands of these types of sites and this is only a short list.)

Social Networks: 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.

Video: A sequence of images processed electronically into an analog or digital format and displayed on a screen with sufficient rapidity as to create the illusion of motion and continuity.

Photography or Video

Department members shall not take photos or videos of incident scenes, fire department apparatus, or civilians who may or may not be involved in the incident while on-duty as members of the Monroe Fire Department except as part of their assigned role (*i.e. Duty Officer or Incident Commander*) or upon the direct orders of the incident commander.

Department personnel should be aware that any images taken while at an incident scene, department training or other department related activity and while the member is on-duty, whether with department cameras, personal cameras or cellphones, immediately become the property of the City of Monroe, are subject to Wisconsin open records laws (*WI Admin Chapter 19.31 to 19.39, Stats. Section 19.31*) and copies must be provided to the department and others upon request of the fire chief or designee.

The department may, from-time-to-time post images of incidents, training evolutions or other department activities to departmental maintained websites or social media sites. The department may also use these pictures in future in-house training and other presentations.

Members wishing that their images not be used in the above listed manners and forums shall notify the department in writing. Once notification has been made, every effort will be made to not include those images as stated.

Occasionally, use and/or release of these images may be unavoidable but in those instances use of the image will be limited to the extent possible.

Any image taken which include department equipment or personnel except for personal equipment issued to the individual firefighter may not be used in any non-departmental forum, website or blog or for any personal or professional use without the express permission of the department; *see exception note below.*

Exception: Social media posting images of one's own issued firefighting equipment or uniforms such as helmet shields, badges or other identifying logos attached to those personal items (i.e. Facebook cover or profile pictures) is approved so long as it projects the firefighter and the department in a positive light. Firefighters posting inappropriate pictures including department logos or equipment may have this permission revoked, in writing, at any time.

Any image which includes department member who can be identified as Monroe Fire Department members may not be used in any non-departmental forums without the express written permission of all members included in the picture.

Social Media

Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:

- The use of department computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization of the fire chief or designee.
- 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.
- Identify themselves as a member of the department.
- Shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work- related assignments without express written permission.
- Do not conduct political activities or private business on department owned or managed sites.
- Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission of the fire chief or designee.
- Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and watermarks.

Personal Use Precautions and Prohibitions

Department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

- Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.

- As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off-duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities may not necessarily be protected speech under the First Amendment.

Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position within the department and of this department.

Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the fire chief or designee.

Adherence to the department's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the World Wide Web. Department personnel shall not to do the following:

- Shall not display department insignia, logos, signs or similar identifying items on personal or professional web pages without prior written permission of the fire chief or designee; *see exception note below.*

Exception: Social media posting images of one's own issued firefighting equipment or uniforms such as helmet shields, badges or other identifying logos attached to those personal items (i.e. Facebook cover or profile pictures) is approved so long as it projects the firefighter and the department in a positive light. Firefighters posting inappropriate pictures including department logos or equipment may have this permission revoked, in writing, at any time.

- Shall not post personal images or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, fire officer or employee of this department without prior permission of the fire chief or designee; *see exception note below.*
- Shall not post material 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, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
- Shall 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.

Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization otherwise known as defamation. This includes publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person. It may include using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's

permission for an exploitative purpose; or publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

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.

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.

Violations

Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or webpage in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

Violation of this social media and photography policy may result in suspension or termination under the terms and limitations of Wisconsin Administrative Code 62.13.

Repeated or consecutive violations of one or more of the above regardless of order may result in employee's immediate suspension and/or eventual termination and possible legal/criminal proceedings under the terms and limitations of Wisconsin Administrative Code 62.13.

Implementation: This policy has been approved by the Officers of the Monroe Fire Department and the Monroe Common Council. This policy, and all adopted procedures, provide a guideline for operations within the Monroe Fire Department. Adoption of these guidelines in no way restricts the incident commander, department administration or the Monroe Common Council from modifying operations or implementing exceptions to policy in the interest of safety, efficiency and harmony within the organization. It shall remain in effect until withdrawn or modified by the department.

Effective Date: December 2, 2014

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