

TEXARKANA, TEXAS POLICE DEPARTMENT  
GENERAL ORDERS MANUAL

<i>Effective Date</i> <b>October 25, 2010</b>		<i>Amended Date</i>		<i>Directive</i> <b>2.27.1</b>	
<i>Subject</i> <b>Use of Social Networking and Social Media Sites</b>					
<i>Reference</i>					
<i>Distribution</i> <b>All Personnel City Manager City Attorney</b>		<i>TPCA Best Practices Recognition Program Reference</i>  <b>No Reference</b>		<i>Review Date</i>  <b>January 15, 2024</b>	
				<i>Pages</i>  <b>3</b>	

**This Operations Directive is for internal use only and does not enhance an officer’s civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as a creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this Operations Directive, if proven, may only form the basis for a complaint by this Department, and only in a non-judicial administrative setting.**

**SECTION 1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish usage guidelines and outline Department policies and expectations for the use of social networking or social media sites by employees. The Department has a duty to protect the reputation of the organization and its employees, as well as guard against liability and potential legal risk.

The use of online social networking and media sites has become a significant part of modern communication and interaction for many people. Employees shall be aware that postings made on these services are public forums and as such are subject to discovery in legal proceedings, as well as any Department investigation. Authors of social network postings have no reasonable expectation of privacy and such postings have the potential to be a means of impeaching and showing discriminatory behavior on the part of police employees. All employees are cautioned to deeply reflect and consider what they are posting on a public forum prior to submission, and that it may be viewed by more than the intended audience at any time, and/or without the author’s knowledge. Any posting to social networking or social media sites should always be reflective of your own personal professionalism and integrity, as well as that of yourself, as a Department employee.

**SECTION 2 POLICY**

- A. It is the policy of the Department that employees refrain from accessing social networking and/or media sites while on duty unless authorized to do so and shall not make any postings unless on behalf of the Department.
- B. It is the policy of the Department that employees while on or off duty shall not use any City or Department logos, photographs or information that identifies them as an employee of the Texarkana Texas Police Department or releases confidential information.
- C. It is the policy of the Department that employees shall not make any postings that damage the reputation of the City or Department or any of its employees.

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**SECTION 3 DEFINITIONS**

Social Networking and Social Media as defined in this policy are meant to be all-inclusive terms. They are meant to generically describe, and include, any and all applications, programs, websites, forums, blogs, on-line profile or information sharing applications, chats, podcasts, picture, video, or music sharing applications, instant messaging, text messaging, and e-mail [except work-related on City e-mail systems], as well as other forms of non-official or personal communications or activity.

Examples of social networking and social media sites are ever-changing, so it is not possible to list them all or to maintain an always-inclusive list. However, most sites such as the following would be included: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, similar chats, groups, forums, or other file sharing applications, and/or most other publicly accessible sites where one may 'author', share, view, upload, or comment on content.

**SECTION 4 PROCEDURES**

- A. While on duty, members of the Department may not access social networking or social media sites through the use of Department provided information systems--unless authorized to do so on behalf of the department or during the course of an investigation.
- B. While on duty, employees may only use personal communications devices to access social networking sites strictly during **authorized** meal breaks, provided such usage does not in any way interfere with the performance of job duties. Employees are prohibited from authoring posts on a social networking site at any time [even during meal breaks].
- C. Due to concerns for officer safety and to preserve tactical advantage, the posting of information related to any police response by any officer or assisting agency is absolutely prohibited without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- D. All matters of, by, within, and about Department details regarding calls for service, and the customers we interact with, are generally considered confidential information which may not be released, blogged about, posted, or otherwise shared outside the department without prior authorization, without it having been obtained through an official open records request, or without the information already being in the public realm [already otherwise released officially].
- E. Posting or sharing by employees of the Department of confidential internal information via social networking or social media sites will be considered to be in violation of this policy, regardless whether or not such posting or sharing occurs while on or off duty.
- F. Employees are not to use, or authorize to be used any information, photographs, speech, or writings that identify them as a member of the Texarkana Texas Police Department.
- G. Internet postings of an unfavorable or unprofessional nature by members of the Department about citizens, co-workers, or an assisting agency are prohibited at any time as they may be detrimental to relationships between the author and others or may cause others to perceive the Department (and the author) unfavorably.
- H. Members of the Department are encouraged to ensure that any such references made to others remain professional and factual, and it is generally expected they seek the permission of those being referenced to avoid possible potential liability.

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- I. All employees must refrain from using social networking tools to embarrass the Department, the City of Texarkana, its citizens, or themselves. They may not use such tools in a way that impairs the organization's reputation or public standing, or that is prohibited by law.
- J. Employees are strictly prohibited from uploading photographs or other images depicting any Department or City logo or otherwise identifying them where images may be interpreted as obscene, defamatory, damaging to the City or Department, or offensive on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability or perceived disability or sexual orientation.
- K. Supervisors will be held accountable, along with the member of the Department who is in breach of this policy, should the supervisor fail to properly supervise and address any issue relative to said policy, particularly those that negatively impact performance and increase liability.
- L. RESPONSIBILITY
  - 1. All members of the Department shall know and comply with all aspects of this directive.
  - 2. All Division Commanders and supervisory personnel are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions and intent of this directive.