

Social Media Policy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make employees and other persons who use Southern Inyo Fire Protection District (hereinafter "District") technology aware of their responsibilities when using social media. Employees should be aware of the potential consequences of violating this policy whether on or off duty. The purpose of this policy is also to protect the interests of the District, the privacy of employees, and protect private information about members of the public served by the District where applicable. This policy is also intended to ensure efficient use of employee time and to minimize distractions from an employee's assigned tasks and duties and to assist employees in making informed decisions concerning the appropriate use of social media. What is said online comes under close scrutiny by others, especially when a communication involves public employees. This policy is intended to protect employees from unintended consequences of inappropriate social media posts and protect the District from harm to its reputation that can result from such posts. This policy also establishes that only authorized individuals are permitted to post on the District's official media sites or speak on behalf of the District when posting on social media.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all District employees (including but not limited to volunteer first responders) whether on or off duty, regardless of using District or personal technology, and to any person using District equipment (phones, computers, networks, internet connections, etc.). For purposes of this policy, the term "Social Media" includes websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking. Nothing in this policy should be construed as denying employees their civil or political liberties under the U.S. and State of California Constitutions. Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with any rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

III. OFFICIAL DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- A) The establishment of any District social media account must be authorized by the Board of Directors (hereinafter "Board"). Any questions regarding District Social Media accounts should be directed to the Board.
- B) Posting on District Social Media sites may only be executed by authorized users (hereinafter "Authorized Users"), as determined by the Board.
- C) Annually, each officer shall provide the Board with a list of Authorized Users. Any changes in the status of an Authorized User must be coordinated with the Board.
- D) When using official Social Media, Authorized Users shall comply with the commenting policy set forth in the attached Exhibit A.
- E) Employees who are responsible for maintaining and posting on any District approved Social Media site must have knowledge of the District's record retention obligations and comply with those obligations. In general, there are very limited circumstances in which content posted on District Social Media sites should be deleted by District employees.

- F) The Board should be consulted for further guidance prior to content being deleted other than in keeping with the policy described in Exhibit A.

IV. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AT WORK

- A) Social Media use shall not interfere with the performance of job duties.
- B) No person shall use District-issued electronics (desktops, laptops, cell phones, etc.) to post, view, or engage with Social Media unless they are an Authorized User or the usage is specifically permitted as a part of that person's job duties.
- C) Authorized Users are expected to comply with "Terms of Use" of social media platforms.

V. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Prohibited conduct for both on-duty and off-duty conduct as applicable, is set forth below. This includes, but is not limited to the following behavior on Social Media:

- A) Disclosure of confidential information, proprietary information, and/or information that is prohibited from release by law.
- B) The use of an employee's or any District email address to register on social media or other online tools utilized for personal use.
- C) Sharing content that is sexual, obscene, violent, or pornographic in nature, in connection with any reference to the District or the individual's employment with the District.
- D) Conduct or encourage illegal activity.
- E) Promote, foster or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or military status.
- F) Threaten, intimidate, or harass any individual.
- G) Incite or promote violence.
- H) Defame any individual, group or organization.
- I) Share information or images that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety, or privacy rights.
- J) Attribute personal statements, opinions, or beliefs to the District or do anything to give the false impression that the employee is representing the District in such personal statements.
- K) Conduct public business or make official statements as a representative of the District via personal social media accounts (including private or direct messages), unless so authorized.
- L) Retaliating for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation.
- M) Post statements or images that disrupt District operations.

VI. ADVISEMENTS

- A) Employees assume any and all risk associated with their off-duty personal/private blogging and use of social media. Remember, what is shared may be available permanently and publicly—even if you think you did not share it publicly or attempt to modify or delete it.
- B) Statements made on social media that affect the workplace may be investigated under any relevant District policy including, but not limited to, the use District-owned property policy, anti-harassment/sexual harassment/non-discrimination policies, computer usage policy, and the equal employment opportunity policy.
- C) Work-related complaints are more likely to be resolved in the workplace than by posting on social media. The District encourages employees to follow the applicable internal complaint procedures rather than using Social Media to voice work-related complaints.
- D) If an employee can be easily identified with, or identifies himself or herself as, a District employee on a social media profile, the employee is encouraged to make clear that the views expressed on the account are their own and do not reflect the views of the District. However, the use of such a disclaimer does not prevent statements or posts from being the basis of disciplinary action. Employees are not absolved of their responsibility to comply with this policy simply by using such a disclaimer.
- E) Communications related to public business may meet the definition of a record under California Public Records Law (and therefore possibly be subject to review and release) even if the communication is on the employee’s personal account.
- F) This policy may be amended from time to time.
- G) Employees are expected to comply with the law and all other District policies when using social media platforms.

VII. CONSEQUENCES OF A POLICY VIOLATION

Violation of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Violations of law or other policies that occur through social media usage may also result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District Social Media Policy and its Exhibit A.

Applicant Signature

Date

Print Name

EXHIBIT A of the Social Media Policy Moderation of Third Party Content on District Social Media Sites

The Southern Inyo Fire Protection District uses a variety of social media platforms to inform the public about the latest news, activities, programs, projects, and events happening in the District and is intended to serve as a means of communication between the District and the public. Our goal is to share ideas and information with as many individuals as possible and our policy is to accept the majority of comments made to District social media pages.

All comments posted to any of the District's social media sites will be monitored. Comments should be related to the posted topic for the District's social media page or post. The District's social media accounts are not meant for comments that do not directly relate to the purpose or topic of the social media website or for service requests. Social media platforms utilized by the District shall not contain any of the following, and the District reserves the right to remove or hide comments containing any of the following elements as soon as possible:

- A) Contains profane language or obscene content
- B) Contains sensitive personal information (medical information, social security numbers, etc.)
- C) Conducts or encourages illegal activity
- D) Promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or military status
- E) Threatens, harasses, or is a personal attack against any individual
- F) Incites or promotes violence
- G) Defames any individual, group or organization
- H) Contains information that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety
- I) Unsolicited business proposals or endorsements/promotion of commercial services, products, or entities
- J) Directly promotes or opposes a candidate for political office

Appeals regarding the removal or hiding of any comments containing the above elements can be submitted to the Board.

A lack of response shall be considered a denial of an appeal. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the District is not obligated to take such actions, and the District disclaims any and all responsibility and liability for materials that the District deems inappropriate for posting which cannot be removed or hidden in an expeditious and otherwise timely manner.

A comment posted by a member of the public on a District social media site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and the posting of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the District, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the District.

The District neither guarantees the authenticity, accuracy, appropriateness nor security of external links, websites, or content linked thereto. Any content posted to this site is subject to public disclosure.

This comment policy is subject to amendment or modification at any time.