



## FDNY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The New York City Fire Department (FDNY or the Department) has established for all FDNY employees the guidelines below concerning the use of social media (Policy). This Policy is based on the New York City Social Media Policy (published by the Office of the Mayor in April 2010), which provides overall guidance for the use of social media by employees of City agencies.
- 1.2 The improper use of social media can undermine the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Fire Department and its employees, and can impact our ability to effectively deliver life-saving services. As such, this Policy applies to both official and personal use of social media by FDNY employees. All employees are reminded that they are accountable for their conduct while on duty and are accountable for off duty conduct when it could reasonably be expected to be disruptive of the workplace or agency operations, or bring the agency into disrepute.
- 1.3 All supervisors, including civilian managers, and Fire and EMS officers, must familiarize themselves with this policy and ensure that this policy is distributed to all employees within their bureaus, units, commands or companies.
- 1.4 Nothing in this policy is meant to interfere with or limit any rights of any employee organization or its members to engage in protected union activity as defined in the Taylor Law and the New York City Collective Bargaining Law (NYCCBL).
- 1.5 Violations of this Policy may subject employees to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from the Department.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 "Social media" is defined as virtual communities and networks used to exchange information that includes but is not limited to messaging and data transmission, blogging and/or photo and video-sharing. Social media include proprietary sites or applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube and Twitter, websites and other content-rich sites, instant messaging, video conferencing and collaboration services such as Wikipedia or any emergent social media platform or service.
- 2.2 Common social media outlets to which this Policy applies include, but are not limited to:
  - 2.2.1 Social networking platforms: A social networking platform allows users to connect with other users and create profiles online with status updates, photos, videos, messaging and other features (e.g., Facebook).
  - 2.2.2 Blogs: A blog is an online journal to which the host regularly posts material on which other users can comment; some blogs, such as microblogs, limit entries to short, text-message-like entries (e.g., Twitter).

- 2.2.3 Video or image-sharing outlets: A video or image-sharing outlet is an online platform on which users can upload, share and view video clips or digital images (e.g., YouTube or Instagram).
- 2.2.4 RSS feeds: An RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed is an online alert system that notifies subscribers of new content on a website.
- 2.2.5 Podcasts: A podcast is an audio file that has been published on the internet and can be downloaded to a computer or a mobile-listening device.
- 2.2.6 Websites: A set of interconnected webpages, usually including a homepage, generally located on the same server, and prepared and maintained as a collection of information by a person, group, or organization.

### **3. ROLE OF OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 3.1 The Department's Office of Public Information (OPI) has been designated as the point of contact for the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) for operation of existing Department social media sites. OPI is required to register with DoITT any social media pages, sites or outlets related to the FDNY that are maintained by Department employees, as directed by the New York City Social Media Policy. OPI will be responsible for the registration of any social media pages, sites and outlets relating to the Department that are created in the future. Assigned managers of approved social media will be required to adhere to the New York City Social Media Policy and will be bound by the same rules and standards governing all New York City social media managers.
- 3.2 OPI is responsible for posting official content on the Department's official social media sites and will ensure that the Department's official social media usage comports with the New York City Social Media Policy.

### **4. OFFICIAL FDNY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 4.1 All FDNY employees must be aware of and abide by the following:
  - 4.1.1 No employee is authorized to post social media content on an official FDNY social media platform except those members specifically assigned to that task by OPI. All such social media usage will be clearly branded as official Department communication.
  - 4.1.2 No Department-related social media site or application is to be created or maintained, except as authorized by the Fire Commissioner and OPI. This includes pages and sites dedicated to individual companies, EMS stations, civilian bureaus, affiliated organizations, photo sharing groups, etc. Requests for authorization are to be submitted to OPI via the Website/Social Media Registration Form attached to this policy.

## **5. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 5.1 FDNY employees are responsible for what they write or post on social media. Activities and statements made on social media sites are done in an online domain where users have no reasonable expectation of privacy. Even if an FDNY member has created "private" or "limited access" accounts or has customized "privacy settings", any statements, photographs, video clips or information that are sent over the internet may still be viewed and disseminated by third parties, even after the content has been edited or deleted by the user. Whether intended to be private or not, postings will be available on the web for a long time and may spread to large audiences by re-posting, sometimes without the knowledge or consent of the original poster. Before posting, consideration should be given to whether the post will disrupt operations or bring the Department or any of its members into disrepute if viewed by supervisors, co-workers, or members of the public.
- 5.2 Employees participating in social media are subject to all applicable Department and City policies even when using social media while off duty or not at work. Department and/or City policy prohibits engaging in conduct tending to bring the City or the FDNY into disrepute, including engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct. Engaging in such behavior on-line, even in a personal capacity, may subject an employee to disciplinary action. In addition, all postings on social media must comply with all laws and FDNY policies regarding the confidentiality of information. Accordingly, FDNY members will comply with the following:
- 5.2.1 Employees should be mindful about disclosing or alluding to their status as a member of the FDNY. Divulging identifying information on social media sites may provide an opportunity for someone to use that information to undermine an employee's personal or professional credibility or that of the FDNY and/or affect the employee's employment status with the Department.
- 5.2.2 Employees are prohibited from revealing Department affiliations of other individuals (e.g., co-workers, supervisors) without the express consent of that individual.
- 5.2.3 Employees may not use the FDNY's logo or name (e.g., FDNY) in any postings or feature the logo or name on any web page (e.g., a website/social media banner or profile photo) for commercial purposes.
- 5.2.4 FDNY personnel shall not post photographs of themselves in uniform, unless the uniform was worn during an event for which a uniform is required. FDNY personnel are prohibited from posting a photograph of themselves if, at the time, the wearing of a uniform is prohibited. These prohibitions will not apply to photographs taken at official Department ceremonies (e.g., promotions, Medal Day). Employees must ensure that any photographs posted on social media sites pursuant to this exception must comply with the regulations set forth in Section 5.2.2 above.

- 5.2.5 Employees are prohibited from posting on the Internet nonpublic items (e.g., information about, or photos or videos of, patients or fire scenes) that were obtained as a result of their position with the Department. Members of the Department are prohibited from taking photographs, videotaping or recording audio while working unless authorized to do so by OPI.
- 5.2.6 Employees are prohibited from engaging in any type of social media contact with patients, fire victims or any members of the public with whom they interact in their capacity as FDNY employees, to the same extent contact is prohibited by other means of communication. Such communications may be deemed inappropriate, a breach of confidentiality or an invasion of privacy.
- 5.2.7 Employees are prohibited from engaging in any type of social media contact (e.g., "friending," or "following") with minors with whom they interact in the course of their FDNY employment, unless specifically authorized by a Department Assistant Commissioner (or higher rank) or Deputy Chief (or higher rank). Such unauthorized communications may be deemed inappropriate and create an appearance of impropriety.
- 5.2.8 Employees should never use their City e-mail addresses when participating in social media. Inasmuch as the FDNY monitors employee Internet use, employees have no right to privacy with respect to any information transmitted, received, created, accessed, obtained, viewed, stored or otherwise found at any time on the FDNY's computer system.
- 5.2.9 Employees currently using social media must immediately ensure that all of their personal social media pages, sites and outlets are reviewed and in compliance with the regulations set forth in this Policy.
- 5.2.10 Employees who identify themselves as FDNY employees, or hold positions with the FDNY that are known to the general public, must make sure that their profile, comments and other postings are consistent with how they want to present themselves publicly. Employees should make a clear disclaimer that the statements and views expressed are theirs and do not reflect the views of the FDNY. Managers and others with leadership responsibilities, in particular, must consider whether their personal thoughts and views may be misconstrued by virtue of their position as expressing the FDNY's view.
- 5.2.11 Employees – including work units such as Fire companies and EMS stations -- are prohibited from posting their own web or other media sites, without prior authorization from the Fire Commissioner and OPI, if such site creates the appearance of being affiliated with or sponsored by the FDNY. Requests for authorization are to be submitted to OPI via the Website/Social Media Registration Form attached to this policy.
- 5.2.12 Guidelines set forth in this Policy will not apply to social media outlets used for investigative purposes.

**6. INQUIRIES AND GUIDANCE**

- 6.1 Employees are encouraged to seek guidance from the OPI (718-999-2056) or the Bureau of Legal Affairs (718-999-2040) if they have questions regarding compliance with this policy.

**7. RELATED PROCEDURES**

- FDNY Civilian Code of Conduct
- FDNY EEO Policy
- New York City Social Media Customer Use Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Law, Chapter 68 New York City Charter, §§ 2600-2606
- EMSC OGP 101-01 Oct. 2, 2008 (EMS)
- HIPAA (AUC 334, EMSC OGP 113-05 and Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations Parts 160 and 164 and NYS Public Health Law)
- New York City Acceptable Use Protocol
- Chapter 25 of the Regulations for the Uniformed Force, General Department
- FDNY Intranet - Bureau of Technology Development and Systems Policy on Limited Use of Office and Technology Resources

**BY ORDER OF THE FIRE COMMISSIONER AND CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT**

# Website/Social Media Registration Form

## Website/Social Media Manager Information – Main Point of Contact for Page

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Social Media Account

Page Name \_\_\_\_\_

Page URL \_\_\_\_\_

General Type of Information Shared on the Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please complete one form for each website and/or social media page.  
Return completed forms to the Office of Public Information.**

**Fax: 718-999-0033**

**Email: [FDNYdigital@fdny.nyc.gov](mailto:FDNYdigital@fdny.nyc.gov)**