



GLASTONBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES



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CATEGORY: ADMINISTRATIVE

SUB- CATEGORY: DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE

SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA

Section I – Introduction

A. Objective

The Department recognizes the importance of social media for its members and/or employees, and acknowledges that its members and/or employees have the right under the First Amendment, in certain circumstances, to speak out on matters of public concern. In accordance with the provisions of the First Amendment, the Department will regulate the use of social media by members and/or employees, including members' and/or employees' personal use of social media, when such use:

- interferes, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the Fire Department;
- is used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
- creates a hostile work environment;
- breaches confidentiality obligations of Fire Department members and/or employees,
- violates the reasonable, ethical and professional standards of members and/or employees of the Fire Department in accordance with their capacity as officers and holders of the public trust;
- violates the law, Fire Department policies and/or other rules and regulations of the Fire Department and/or the Town of Glastonbury

The Fire Department, through its Chief, hereby establishes the following set of guidelines as it pertains to the use of personal web pages, internet postings and social networking web sites.

The guidelines further recognize that Fire Department members and/or employees shall be required to comply with the Technology Policy of the Town as it may be amended from time to time.

The guidelines established herein will also address and apply to photographs and electronic images taken by members of the Glastonbury Fire Department.

Section II – Definitions

“Social Media” is the term given to websites, online tools and interactive communication technologies that allow users to interact with one another, to share information, opinions, knowledge, photos and interests. Examples of social media include such web platforms as blogs, message boards, wikis, social and professional networking websites, and content sharing sites. Specific examples include but are not necessarily limited to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and MySpace.

Section III – Policy

A. Rules Concerning Personal Social Media Activity

- A member and/or employee may not mention, discuss or reference the Fire Department on personal social networking sites in a manner that could reasonably be construed as an official Fire Department communication, unless the member and/or employee also states that the post is the personal communication of the member and/or employee of the Fire Department and that the views posted are the member's and/or employee's alone and do not represent the views of the Fire Department.
- Members and/or employees shall be required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with patients, citizens, colleagues or youth volunteers.
- Unless given written consent, members and/or employees may not use the Fire Department's logo or trademarks on any of their personal posts.
- Members and/or employees must refrain from engaging in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications which are in violation of the rules and regulations and code of conduct of the Fire Department. Such posts also reflect poorly on the Fire Department's reputation, can affect the service to the community and may substantially and materially interfere with a member's and/or employee's ability to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities. Instead, members are encouraged to conduct their online activities in a respectful manner.
- Members and/or employees are individually responsible for their personal posts on social media. Members and/or employees may be sued by other members and/or employees, patients or other citizens, and by any individual that views a member's and/or employee's social media posts as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. As such activities are outside the scope of the member's and/or employee's services, members/employees may be personally liable for such claims.
- Members and/or employees are required to comply with all Fire Department and/or Town policies and procedures with respect to the use of computer equipment, networks or electronic devices when accessing social media sites. Any access to personal social media activities while on Fire Department property or using Fire Department equipment must comply with those policies, and may not interfere with a member's and/or employee's duties at work.
- The Fire Department reserves the right to monitor all members and/or employees' use of Fire Department computers and other electronic devices, including a member/employee blogging and social networking activity. A member and/or employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any personal communication or post made through social media while using Fire Department computers, cellular telephones or other electronic data devices. The Fire Department reserves the right to remove any messages or posts that do not comply with the Fire Department's rules, regulations and policies related to social media.

- All posts on personal social media must comply with the Fire Department's policies concerning confidentiality, including the confidentiality of patient information. If a member and/or employee are uncertain about the confidential nature of information the member and/or employee is considering posting, the member and/or employee should consult with the Chief prior to making the post.
- A member and/or employee may not link a personal social media site or webpage to the Fire Department's website or the websites of its programs; or post Fire Department material on a social media site or webpage without written permission.
- All Fire Department policies that regulate off-duty conduct apply to social media activity including, but not limited to, policies related to public trust, illegal harassment, code of conduct, and protecting confidential information.
- Finally, each member is reminded that online messages and activities are not private, may remain online indefinitely and may be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act under certain circumstances.

B. Rules and Requirements regarding Photography and Recording Devices

- Personnel may photograph, document, or record emergency scenes utilizing Department owned devices only with proper authorization from the command authority in charge of the scene.
- Any electronic media documenting an incident such as digital pictures, video or other records of the incident that are collected by any member of the Department in this manner are and shall remain property of the Fire Department.
- Except as otherwise provided below, such electronic media and/or other documentation shall be for internal, investigative or training uses and shall not be transmitted by any means outside the Department unless expressly authorized by the Chief. The Fire Marshal is authorized to transmit this type of information outside the Department in association with an ongoing fire investigations as may be necessary as part of the fire investigation process.
- Fire Department operations allow members access to situations, investigations and crime scenes from which the media and press may be excluded due to operational, safety, or investigative reasons. As such, electronic media information and pictures gathered at emergency/incident scenes must be strictly controlled to be in accordance with HIPAA and other regulations so as not to jeopardize patient confidentiality; fire, accident or crime scene investigations.
- Personnel shall not use any personally owned devices to photograph, document, or record any emergency scene/incident while functioning as a members of the Glastonbury Fire Department. "Personally owned devices" include but are not limited to: film cameras; digital cameras; video recording cameras and device; cell phones and cell phone cameras.

Section IV - Violations of this Policy

- The Fire Department reserves the right to monitor content on the web and to remove posts that violate this Policy. Any violations of this policy shall render the member and/or employee subject to disciplinary and/or other action, including but not limited to termination of membership/employment from the Fire Department.

Section V - Approval

Fire Chief Michael P. Tracy

Date of Approval: 1/11/16