



Alexandria Police Department
Directive 2.6



Social Media/Internet Postings

Effective Date: 04-20-2018		 Cancels: 04-01-2011
Updated Date:	Section(s):	SME Review Date:
Updated Date:	Section(s):	2021

CONTENTS

- 2.6.01 POLICY/PURPOSE
- 2.6.02 AUTHORITY
- 2.6.03 DEFINITIONS
- 2.6.04 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
- 2.6.05 DEPARTMENT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2.6.01	POLICY/PURPOSE
---------------	-----------------------

The purpose of this directive is to establish the policy and expectations for Alexandria Police Department employees concerning the use of social media.

Social media allows individuals to express themselves and to communicate with other individuals for personal relationships, friendships, professional networking or correspondence. Department employees have a right to post to social media and enjoy free speech rights; however, such rights are subject to certain limitations due to the nature of law enforcement work.

To protect the Department’s ability to retain public confidence and to carry out its mission, the Department must ensure that content posted to social media by Department employees does not impair the Department’s ability to operate efficiently and effectively, does not compromise the integrity of ongoing investigations, and does not jeopardize the safety of Police employees.

Violations of this directive could result in discipline, up to, and including, termination.

2.6.02	AUTHORITY and ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS (NOT A COMPREHENSIVE LIST)
---------------	--

Administrative Regulation 1-3 – Departmental Regulations

Directive 2.2 – Rules of Conduct

Administrative Regulation 10-4 – Electronic Mail (E-Mail) and Internet Use.

2.6.03 DEFINITIONS

“Social Media” refers to digital communication platforms that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo and video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and news sites. Some examples of social media include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, and Tumblr.

2.6.04 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Department employees are free to express themselves on social media as private citizens regarding matters of public concern, to the degree that the content does not impair the Department’s ability to provide effective and efficient services to the public.
- B. Employees who choose to post content that identifies themselves as Police Department employees should consider the effect that such postings may have on their personal safety and reputation. Such postings must comply with the contents of this directive, all other directives (including Directive 2.2 Rules of Conduct), the City’s Administrative Regulations, and all applicable laws.

Department employees shall obtain the approval of other Department employees before posting content showing that person in uniform, or otherwise identifying that person as a law enforcement officer.

- C. Employees must consider the impact of their expressive conduct on the Department and upon their fellow employees. When engaged in the use of social media, every employee should consider how their speech could impair the maintenance of discipline by their supervisors, impair harmony amongst their coworkers, damage close personal relationships, impede the performance of their duties, interfere with the operation of the Department, conflict with their responsibilities, or undermine the mission of the Department. Additionally, every employee should consider their audience and whether their speech will abuse the authority and public accountability that their role entails. Employees are encouraged to seek the guidance of supervisors regarding any posting that may adversely affect the Department’s efficient and effective provision of law enforcement.
- D. Unless expressly approved by the Chief of Police, individual employees are not authorized to speak for, or on behalf of, the Department. To avoid confusion, employees are encouraged to use disclaimers indicating that their postings represent their own views and that they are not necessarily the views of the Department.

- E. Employees are hereby notified that the posting of certain types of content has a tendency to disrupt the Department's provision of law enforcement services and has the potential to undermine the mission of the Department. Examples of such content include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. Content that discloses confidential or privileged information;
 2. Content that discloses information that employees have gathered as a result of their employment and is part of an on-going criminal investigation or matter;
 3. Content that condones or promotes illegal activity;
 4. Content that violates the rights of any person or entity;
 5. Content that threatens the safety of any person or entity;
 6. Content that discriminates against any race, religion, gender, or other protected class of individuals.

For further guidelines on the release of information, employees should refer to APD Police Directives 2.2 - Rules of Conduct, 3.6B - Release of Information from Police Reports, and 10.21 - Public Information and Media Services.

2.6.05	DEPARTMENT USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
---------------	---------------------------------------

- A. Any employee who chooses not to have their image used by the Department in the media must complete a Denial of Permission form and submit it to the Public Information Officer (See PD 10.21, Public Information and Media Services).
- B. All undercover social media accounts used for investigations must be approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee (See PD 11.23, Vice and Narcotics Enforcement).

BY AUTHORITY OF:

Michael L. Brown
Chief of Police