

<b>HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL</b>		
<b>Issue Date</b> February 2021	<b>Review Date</b> February 2022	<b>Directive Number</b> <b>6.5.5</b>
<b>Accreditation Index:</b>		<b>Rescinds:</b> Directive 6.5.5 of November 2019
<b>Chapter:</b> Six – General Procedures		<b>Section:</b> Five – Communications and Information Technology
<b>Chief of Police:</b> <i>John F. Viola</i>		

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA AND NETWORKING**

**I. PURPOSE**

The Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange. The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with guidance concerning appropriate content transmitted via electronic communications, social media and networking websites, and other electronically transmitted material when referencing the Haverford Township Police Department and its employees. This policy will also restrict the electronic dissemination of information concerning crimes, crashes, investigations, and other police business to unauthorized persons outside of the police department. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

**II. POLICY**

The Haverford Township Police Department recognizes the role social media and networking plays in the personal life of some employees. The personal use of social media and networking can have an effect on departmental personnel in their official capacity. The integrity of the Police Department must be above reproach. As such, any conduct that would compromise this integrity and thus, undermine the public confidence in the Police Department and the law enforcement profession in general is prohibited. The Department reserves the right to monitor employee use of social media as well as social networking websites to assure that a positive image of the Department is maintained.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Blog** – A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web Log”.

**Confidential Information** – Investigative details, digital photographs, video, audio or other digital media depicting the Police Department, its employees, crime scenes, internal videos, daily work activity, information sensitive to law enforcement, and/or information which could be considered personal or private or could potentially expose the Police Department to liability.

**Page** – The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.

**Post** – Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

**Profile** – Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

**Social Media** – A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This content and participation allows user to communicate through the sharing of information, photos, videos, audio, text and other multimedia files. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn), micro blogging sites (Twitter, Tumblr, Nixle), photo and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs and news sites (Digg, Rddit).

**Social Networking Sites** – Online platforms, generally internet based, that allow users to access a virtual community. These platforms allow for the creation of profiles, sharing of information and socialization using a range of technologies to users interested in a particular topic or in communication others. This communication technology may include but is not limited to text or instant messaging, voice conferencing, video conferencing, blogs and or “wall” posts.

**Speech** – Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, video, or related forms of communication.

**Wiki** – Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

### IV. PROCEDURES

#### A. General

1. As public servants, employees are cautioned that speech on-duty or off-duty, made to pursuant to their official duties, is not protected speech under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the

department. Such speech is speech that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities.

- a) Employees should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their official position and the department.
- b) Employees should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly changing and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
- c) Employees should exercise caution and good judgment when social networking on-line. Employees should be aware that speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images or acts, and statements that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, sexual orientation, or protected class of individuals may provide grounds for impeaching an employee's testimony in criminal or civil proceedings.
- d) If any employee indicates in any public forum any opinion on a police related issue, then that employee shall state that the view and opinions expressed are those of the employee and not those of the department. This statement does not inoculate the employee for speech deemed detrimental to the department.
- e) Department personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum, including but not limited to social media and social networking sites, may be accessed by the department at anytime without prior notice.

## B. Responsibilities of Employees

1. Employees are reminded that they should always conduct themselves in a professional manner, whether on-duty or off-duty. By virtue of their position as an employee of a law enforcement agency, the public tends to hold them to a higher standard. As a result, employees who choose to utilize social media and networking websites should realize that their online activities should reflect such professional expectations and standards.
  - a) Employees are prohibited from using department computers or cell phones for any unauthorized purpose
  - b) Employees are prohibited from using department computers or cell phones to access social networking websites while on-duty, unless permission is granted by a supervisor and you are conducting an investigation or working in an official capacity.

- c) Employees are prohibited while on-duty from accessing social networking websites from private computers, cell phones or other electronic devices.
- d) Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the chief of police or his designee.
  - (1) The following types of information is specifically prohibited from posting on social networking sites;
    - (a) Confidential, sensitive or copyrighted information to which the employee has access due to their employment.
    - (b) Information from an on-going criminal or administrative investigation including photographs, videos and audio recordings.
    - (c) Photographs of deceased or injured persons, victims, suspects, arrestees or evidence to which the employee has access due to their employment.
    - (d) Statements about an on-duty use of force incident.
    - (e) Comments related to pending prosecutions.
    - (f) Pictures or videos of official department training, activities or work related assignments without the permission of the Chief of Police.
    - (g) Pictures of the inside of the police facility.
    - (h) Pictures or video of any crime or crash scene to which the employee has access due to their employment.
- e) For safety and security reasons, employees are cautioned not to disclose their employment with this department nor shall they post information pertaining to any other member of the department without permission from the other member prior to the posting of the information.
  - (1) Employees shall not display department logos, uniforms or similar identifying items on social networking sites or personal web pages without permission of the Chief of Police or his designee.
  - (2) Employees shall not identify themselves or other employees, in anyway including but not limited to by speech or by the posting of personal photographs, as an employee of the department on

social networking sites or personal web pages without permission of the Chief of Police or his designee.

- (a) Officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
  - (3) Employees may not display pictures of marked or unmarked police department vehicles on social networking sites or personal web pages without permission of the Chief of Police or his designee.
  - (4) Weaponry or other equipment owned by the department and/or personally or privately owned by employees shall not be displayed or referenced to on social media or social networking sites if such displays or depictions promote or glorify violence.
    - (a) Glorifying violence would not include legal, licensed hunting activities.
2. Department employees are free to express themselves as private citizens through social media and on social networking sites to the degree that their speech does not:
- a) Impair working relationships within the Department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important.
  - b) Impede the performance of duties.
  - c) Impair discipline and harmony among coworkers.
  - d) Negatively impact the public perception of the department.
  - e) Conflict with rules and regulations.

C. Reporting Violations

- 1. Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of any provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

**BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE**