

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS DIRECTIVES



1315 DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY GUIDELINES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the directive is to establish policies and procedures for the use of social media to enhance communications and information exchange. This policy establishes San Bernardino County Fire Protection District's (SBCFPD) position on the use and management of social media. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, in general terms as technology will outpace our ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

II. PHILOSOPHY

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting SBCFPD and its personnel in meeting community education, community information, fire prevention, and other related organizational and community objectives. The department also recognizes the role that social media tools may play in the personal lives of department personnel. The personal use of social media can have an effect on San Bernardino County Fire Protection District personnel in their official professional capacity. This policy is a means to provide guidance of a precautionary nature, as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

III. POLICY

The social media code of conduct shall be adhered to by all San Bernardino County Fire Protection District members:

Department sanctioned use

- A. When engaging in social media or social networking activities, all personnel will maintain a level of professionalism both on-duty and off-duty that is consistent with the honorable mission of SBCFPD.
- B. Personnel accessing social media sites for purpose of supporting San Bernardino County Fire Protection District business must have written approval from a Division Chief/Division Manager or designee.
- C. The publication of any statement or comment, imagery or information through any medium of communication which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, or efficiency of the department is prohibited.
- D. Members posting pictures involving department logo, equipment or on an incident must reflect positively on the organization and be consistent with the honorable mission of the department.
- E. Members posting video (see policy 1320 Department Video Production & Distribution).
- F. Personnel are prohibited from conduct that may bring discredit upon the department or members of the department.

- G. Personnel may speak on a matter of public concern as a spokesperson for the department with the permission of the Fire Chief or designee.
- H. Personnel shall not conduct political activities or private business.
- I. Personnel shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to social media.

IV. PERSONAL USE

- A. Department personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.
- B. No member, while speaking as a private citizen on matters of public concern regarding the fire department shall speak in such a way as to cause actual harm or disruption to the operations of the department.
- C. Personnel shall not engage in speech that is false, deceptive, libelous, and slanderous or causes harm to other members (including speech that constitutes hate speech or harassment). Personnel shall not discuss protected or confidential matters of the department including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Matters that are under investigation
 - 2. Patient or employee information protected by HIPPA laws
 - 3. Personnel matters
 - 4. Sensitive information specific to an incident that would potentially embarrass those members of the public or department involved or present
- D. Personnel shall not access personal social media sites on department equipment.
- E. Pictures of San Bernardino County Fire Protection District equipment, logo, station photos and/or snapshots taken while on duty must reflect positively on the organization and be consistent with the honorable mission of the department. Any questions about the appropriateness of a picture to be posted must be approved by a Division Chief/Division Manager or designee.
- F. Violation of this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.