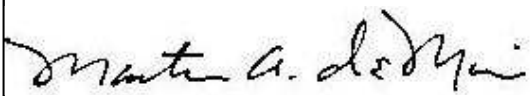


**Payson Fire Department
General Orders**

Category: GO Section: Information & Data Subject: External Communications	GO #1.7.4 Date Adopted: 1/12 Revision Hx: 
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to provide information on the use of various external communications media including more traditional forms such as press releases and newspaper articles, but also the internet including social media sites, to help ensure that communications positively contribute to the mission of the Payson Fire Department (PFD). This policy is not meant to address one particular form of external communications but rather media in general as it is certain that technology will outpace our ability to address each individual emerging communications media type.

POLICY

External communications provide a valuable means of assisting the PFD in meeting community education, information, fire prevention and life safety initiatives as well as other related organizational and community objectives. This General Order identifies possible uses that may be evaluated and utilized as deemed necessary by the PFD administrative and supervisory personnel. The PFD also recognizes that social media tools may play a role in the personal lives of department personnel. The personal use of any media, especially social media, because of its instantaneous and longevity characteristics, can have an effect on firefighters in their official capacity as employees. This policy is meant to provide guidance of a precautionary nature as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of media by PFD personnel.

All PFD external communications including social media websites or pages shall be approved by the Fire Chief or designee. For the purposes of this General Order, Battalion Chiefs are designated as representatives of the Fire Chief and as such are empowered to review and approve such communications.

All external communications including social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the PFD and shall have the PFD logo and contact information prominently displayed.

Content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies of the Town and the PFD.

All external communications content is subject to open public records laws.

Relevant records retention schedules apply.

Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

PROCEDURES

Types of External Communications:

Press Releases

Press releases may be prepared to inform the public of specific events or incidents. A press release may be prepared by any member with the approval of the Fire Chief or designee and shall be reviewed for content and accuracy prior to release. For information purposes a copy of the press release should be forwarded to the Town Manager, Deputy Town Manager for Public Safety and the Town Council.

Newspaper & Magazine Articles

Newspaper articles may be prepared to inform the public of activities of the PFD or as a means to promote fire and injury prevention messages. Articles may be prepared by any member with the approval of the Fire Chief or designee and reviewed for accuracy and content prior to submission for publication.

Radio and Television Appearances

PFD personnel may appear on local and regional radio and television programs periodically to discuss activities of the PFD or as a means to promote fire and injury prevention messages and programs. Scheduled appearances and the planned content of the presentation will be approved by the Fire Chief or designee.

Town of Payson Website Information

Periodically information may be added to or updated on the PFD's page on the Town of Payson's website. This information may be prepared by any member with the approval of the Fire Chief or designee. Prior to submission to the TOP Information Technology Director for posting on the website, the information will be reviewed for accuracy and content.

Social Networking Sites

Although the PFD does not currently participate in social media websites, this may change in the future. The following shall apply in the case of PFD operated social media sites as well as members posting information on non-department sponsored/operated sites.

Definitions

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.

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 enable the user to generate content and encourage other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites: Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, and other sites. (There are thousands of these types of sites and this is only a short list.)

Social Networks: Platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

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

Strategy

Each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the PFD's presence on the website.

Social media page(s) should link to the PFD's official website.

Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as the community, civic leadership, employees or potential recruits.

Procedures

Social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the PFD.

Social media pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the PFD reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.

Social media pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

Department-Sanctioned Use

PFD personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:

Not use Town computers to access social media without authorization.

Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the PFD and, accordingly, shall adhere to all PFD standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.

Identify themselves as a member of the PFD.

Not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to PFD training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.

Not conduct political activities or private business.

Not use personally owned devices to manage the PFD's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission.

Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

Potential Uses

Social media is a valuable tool when providing information about:

Road closures,
Special events,

Weather emergencies,
Major ongoing events in the jurisdiction that affects the entire community,
Employment and community service opportunities.

Personal Use of Social Media

Precautions and Prohibitions: PFD personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

Department personnel are free to express themselves off duty 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.

As public employees, PFD personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to their professional duties or responsibilities may not necessarily be protected speech under the First Amendment.

- a. This may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department.
- b. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their position within the PFD and of the PFD, and so should conduct themselves accordingly.

Not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the Fire Chief or designee.

Photographs, electronic images or other images taken with film cameras, digital cameras, cell phone cameras or video recording devices of any sort while an employee is on duty or in the performance of their duties shall be considered property of the department and not used without expressed consent of the Fire Chief or his designee. If these images are obtained they should be downloaded on to the department computer system in the appropriate location and erased from the original device.

PFD personnel are cautioned not to do the following:

- a. Display Department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages without prior permission.
- b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, fire officer or employee of this department without prior permission.
- c. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the World Wide Web.

Adherence to the PFD's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:

- a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
- b. Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the PFD without express authorization of the Fire Chief.
- c. Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization otherwise known as defamation to include:
 1. Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;

2. Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
3. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

PFD personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.

PFD personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.

VIOLATIONS

Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting on any website, webpage or other media in violation of the provisions of this General Order shall notify their supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

Violation of this General Order may result in disciplinary action up to and including possible suspension, demotion or termination.