



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SHERIFF

Montgomery County, Maryland

Darren M. Popkin, Sheriff



GENERAL ORDERS/PERSONNEL PROCEDURES

<u>Subject:</u> Social Media Usage	<u>Number:</u> 2.32	<u>Effective Date:</u> 07/15/16
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Policy: It is the policy of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) that the utilization of personal web pages, blogging and other social networking platforms is permissible by employees of the Sheriff's Office. As an employee of the Sheriff's Office, the use of good judgment, decency and common sense is expected both on and off duty while participating in social networking and internet use. Employees are expected to adhere to the values enumerated in Administrative Directive 1.02, Mission, Values, Goals and Objectives of the Sheriff's Office as well as General Orders/Personnel Procedure 2.01, Code of Ethics at all times. **(26.1.1)**

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I. Definitions

- A. Website – Any computerized document, file or menu accessible on the Internet or the World Wide Web. The term website for the purposes of this directive includes a web page.
- B. Internet – Electronic communications network that connects networks and organizational computer facilities around the world.
- C. Social Media – Category of internet based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation including, but not limited to, social networking platforms (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), photo and video sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (e.g. Digg, Reddit).
- D. Social Networks – Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- E. Employees – All sworn and non-sworn personnel of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

II. Personal Social Networking Rules

- A. Employees must not post, transmit or endorse the following types of information on any social network, social media, website or any other internet site, whether obtained on county owned or personal devices, without express permission of the Sheriff:
- (1) Images, descriptions or personal information of any victim, witness, suspect or defendant.
 - (2) Images or descriptions of any crime scene.
 - (3) Any information regarding previous, current or future investigations.
 - (4) Any information contained within an employee's personnel file.
 - (5) Any information protected by The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).
 - (6) Any information that would bring discredit or have an adverse effect upon the reputation of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.
 - (7) Images or other descriptions of MCSO uniforms, badges, patches, marked vehicles or property of any kind, which could have an adverse effect on the reputation of the MCSO or an employee of the office.
 - (8) Sexual, violent, racial or ethically derogatory material; comments, pictures, artwork, video or other references which may adversely affect the reputation of the MCSO or an employee of the office.
- B. Employees are responsible for all postings on their personal social networking sites. Should a third party post information on an employee's social networking site which does not conform to the policies of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, it is the employee's responsibility to remove the adverse posting immediately.
- C. Employees are not to disclose any document or information that has been designated "For Official Use Only" or "Law enforcement Sensitive" on any social media or other internet based platforms.
- D. Employees should not post any private or personal information of fellow employees without their consent.
- E. Pursuant to Administrative Directive 1.06, Discrimination/Harassment, it is the policy of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office to not tolerate discrimination or sexual harassment. This also applies to statements made on any internet based platform.

- F. Pursuant to General Orders/Personnel Procedures 2.02, General Orders, Order 30, no employee, while acting in their official capacity or representing themselves as an employee of the Sheriff's Office, may publicly criticize or ridicule the official action of any fellow employee, public official or judge. This also applies to statements made on any internet based platform if the deputy has identified themselves as employed by the Sheriff's Office or associated themselves with the Sheriff's Office on their social media site.
- G. Employees should consider their personal safety before identifying themselves as deputies and disclosing their home address, phone number or other identifiable information on social networking sites.
- H. Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet posting, such as future employment, cross-examination in court proceedings and public as well as private embarrassment.
- I. Employees are encouraged to seek the guidance of supervisors regarding any posting that may adversely reflect upon either the Sheriff's Office or the professionalism or integrity of the employee.

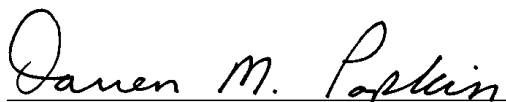
III. Social Networking While On Duty

- A. Accessing social networking sites while working is allowed when:
 - (1) It does not conflict with Sheriff's Office policies and procedures, and
 - (2) It does not interfere with the employee's work commitments or performance.
- B. Prohibited Activities
 - (1) Text messaging while operating a Montgomery County owned vehicle.
 - (2) Accessing any website or any social media platform on a personal device while operating a Montgomery County owned vehicle.

IV. CALEA Standards

26.1.1

AUTHORITY:


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