

STANISLAUS CONSOLIDATED FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ARTICLE: C-39  
SECTION: Administrative Division  
DATE: 6/12/2013  
SUPERSEDES: Photo & Electronic Imagery  
TITLE: Social Media Policy

**BACKGROUND**

The Stanislaus Consolidated Fire Protection District (District) acknowledges that the use of instant technology and social media provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of information for the betterment of the District and its members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for the purpose of recruitment, safety education, and public relations. As such, the District embraces the usage of social media for that purpose. However, use of social media also presents potential liability, and carries with it certain responsibilities. The District has established this policy to assist employees in making responsible decisions about the appropriate use of social media.

**PURPOSE**

This policy establishes the District's instant technology and social media use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated liabilities from the use of this technology where possible. The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements for participation in social media, including District hosted social media, and Non-District social media in which an individual's affiliation with the District is known, identified, or presumed. This policy is not intended to limit the right to freedom of speech or expression; but as the District is a public entity, this policy has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization, its members, and the public we are sworn to protect.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all District employees, temporary employees, interns, volunteers, vendors, consultants, contractors performing business on behalf of the District, or any other individuals who are contractually obligated to follow the District's policies. It applies to the use of social media during work and non-work time, and when the person's affiliation with the District is identified, known or presumed.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. **Instant Technology:** Includes but not limited to: Instant messaging, texting, paging, as well as social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.

2. **Social Media:** Includes but not limited to: Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, blogs (WordPress, Blogger, LiveJournal), microblogs such as Twitter, video sharing (YouTube, Vimeo), photography sharing (Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr) and location-based social networks (Facebook places, Foursquare, Yelp), and personal websites or webpages.
3. **Social Networking:** Generally includes all types of postings and/or interaction on the internet, including, but not limited to: Social networking sites, blogs, and other online journals and diaries, discussion boards and chat rooms, Smartphone applications, multimedia host sites and similar media. Social networking activities may also include the permission or refusal of post by others where an individual can control the content of the postings.
4. **Blog:** Short for “Web Log” a site that allows an individual or group of individuals to share a running log of events and personal insights with online audiences; may include video formats (blogs).
5. **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA):** this privacy rule was created to provide greater protection against involuntary disclosure of an individual’s medical information, particularly as that information is stored and exchanged electronically among health care providers, insurance companies and employers.
6. **District Owned or Administered Media Sites:** Any internet or intranet site that is owned or administered by the District. Public external examples include but are not limited to:  
[www.scfpd.us](http://www.scfpd.us), [www.twitter.com/StanConFirePIO](https://www.twitter.com/StanConFirePIO) , [www.youtube.com/StanConFireTV](https://www.youtube.com/StanConFireTV) ,  
[www.facebook.com/StanislausConsolidatedFirePIO](https://www.facebook.com/StanislausConsolidatedFirePIO)
7. **Non-District media sites:** Any internet site not owned or administered by the District; may include personal social networking sites.

## POLICY

1. Employees should limit participation in social media activities during work hours unless required by their job duties. Any use of social media shall not interfere with job duties or responsibilities. Participation in social media activities during break times or in a manner that is consistent with other general internet use is not prohibited by this policy.
2. Employees are prohibited from posting on any social media site or electronically transmitting any electronic recordings (photos, video, or audio of the District’s on-duty responses/activities with approval of the chain of command or the Public Information Officer. Below are some examples of content that may be posted with prior approval:
  - a. Vehicle accidents (no license plates showing or victim/patient faces)
  - b. Vehicle extrications (no license plates showing or victim/patient faces)

- c. Fire ground activities
  - d. Rescue training or actual rescue operations (no victim/patient faces)
  - e. Boat operations
  - f. Helicopter operations
  - g. Hazmat operations
  - h. Training
  - i. Community interactions/charity events
3. Employees are prohibited from posting on any social media site or electronically transmitting any information regarding the transport, treatment, or condition of any patient.
  4. Employees are encouraged to use good judgment when posting on any social media site or electronically transmitting any information that impairs or impedes the performance of District operations, adversely affects the efficiency of co-workers, or negatively affects public perception of the District, or that is unlawful or inconsistent with state or federal law.
  5. Employees are prohibited from posting on any social media site or electronically transmitting any information that could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, discriminating or disparaging to the District, co-workers or members of the public. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex disability, religion or any other status protected by law or District policy.
  6. Employees are prohibited from posting on any District owned or administered media site or electronically transmitting messages on district owned equipment, images, comments, or cartoons that foster or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.
  7. Employees shall not use social networking activities including, personal email and mobile (text) messaging to transmit, receive, or store information regarding the District, its employees, or patients that is illegal, and/or protected under HIPPA or state law or which is considered confidential information.
  8. This policy does not prohibit employees from discussing the terms and conditions of their employment or limit or interfere with employee rights protected under state and federal law.
  9. The District prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee

who retaliates against another associate for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

10. Release of photos/information containing minors shall be prohibited unless authorized by the Fire Chief and parents/legal guardian of the minor.

## **PROCEDURES**

### 1. When Using District Owned or Administered Media Sites:

- a. Employees are invited to visit and interact with the Districts owned or administered media sites including, external websites, the District's intranet site and the District's Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts in connection with their employment as appropriate.
- b. Employees must abide by the District's Equal Employment Opportunity, Workplace Harassment, and other applicable policies, all of which apply to social media communication with equal force as other forms of verbal or written communication.
- c. All postings must abide by applicable copyright laws and individuals must ensure that they have permission to use or reproduce any copyrighted text, photos, graphics, video, or other material owned by others.
- d. The District reserves the right to monitor, prohibit, restrict, block, suspend, terminate, delete or discontinue an employee's access to any District media site at any time without notice, for any reason, at the Fire Chief's sole discretion. The District may remove, delete, block, filter, or restrict by any other means any materials at the Fire Chief's sole discretion.

### 2. When Using Non-District Owned or Administered Media Sites:

The guidelines in this section apply to an employee's personal social media activities when they are speaking on behalf of the District

The procedures below are designed to reduce the likelihood that personal social networking activities will have an adverse effect on themselves, the District, other employees, the public, or the District's mission.

- a. Individuals must speak for themselves and not on behalf of the District unless authorized to do so as part of their job duties.
- b. Under no circumstances may employees impersonate someone associated with or speaking about the District.

- c. Employees will be responsible for any intentionally false statements that are publicly viewable and that damage the District or the District's reputation.
3. General Use of Information and participation in Social Media:
  - a. Employees shall not speak to the media on behalf of the District. Only those officially designated by the District have the authorization to speak on behalf of the District
  - b. Posting of content on social media sites that contain District equipment, uniforms, or logos must be approved by the chain of command or the Public Information Officer.
4. Management Responsibility;
  - a. Managers may become aware of information considered to be inappropriate or in violation of this policy from a variety of sources. When information is brought to a manager's attention and the manager believes that it may violate this policy, the manager must immediately notify their chain of command. Following the SCFPD discipline process and FBOR.
  - b. Managers may not require employees to access or log on to personal social media sites or to disclose personal social media usernames or passwords.
  - c. It is not the District's intention to regulate protected off-duty social networking activities, therefore managers must consult with the fire chief or his designee before taking any corrective action, including, but not limited to: requesting an employee remove a posting, counseling an employee verbally, or in writing regarding a posting.
  - d. Managers may not approve, deny, or limit leaves of absence on the basis of information on an employee's social media site without consulting the fire chief or his designee.
  - e. Managers engaged in hiring are prohibited from conducting social media background checks. Instead, any such checks will be done by the background investigators, following the background investigation procedures.
  - f. By virtue of their position, management level employees must consider their unique role in the District and must be especially conscious that their personal thoughts may be misunderstood as expressing the District's positions.

## **REFERENCES**

1. All current policies can be found on the District's web site: [www.scfpd.us](http://www.scfpd.us) by logging in.
2. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA)

3. District Policy # A-4 Code of Ethics
4. District Policy #A-5 General Conduct
5. District Policy #A-8 Internet and Email Usage
6. District Policy #B-11 Harassment Policy
7. District Policy #C-32 Public Information Officer

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