


HR LF	HR HF	Fire Department Town of Belmont NH 03220	<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>	Title: Social Media	<b>GO NO: GO 11-011-1</b>  EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/28/2011 Revised 06/12/2014  <b>REVISION NO: 01</b>
LR LF	LR HF				

**I) PURPOSE, SCOPE, APPLICATION**

- A) The Belmont Fire Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity with its employees.
- B) This policy establishes the department’s position on the use and management of social media
- C) 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) REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

- A) The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled on 2/07/2011 worker’s negative comments are protected under federal labor laws, Under the National Labor Relations Act, employees may discuss the terms and conditions of their employment with coworkers and others. However, it does warn that it does not give employees free rein to discuss anything work-related on social media.
- B) Belmont Fire Department Code of Conduct

**III) DEFINITIONS**


- A) *Blog*: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.
- B) *Post*: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- C) *Profile*: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- D) *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.)
- E) *Social Networks*: Platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- F) *Speech*: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

**IV) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A) It shall be the responsibility of the Officer in Charge to enforce this General Order.
- B) All members of the Belmont Fire Department shall know and understand the General Order.

**V) SAFETY**

- A) N/A


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**VI) ENFORCEMENT**

- A) Failure to understand and follow this Standard Operating guideline may result in disciplinary action.
- B) Any deviation from this guideline shall require a written report to the Officer in Charge and the Deputy Chief.
- C) This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.

**VII) GENERAL ORDER**


- A) Department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.
  - 1) 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.
  - 2) As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to the employee's professional duties and 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 department and of this department.
- B) Department personnel 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 Fire Chief or designee.
- C) Department personnel are cautioned not to do the following:
  - 1) Display department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages without prior written permission.
  - 2) 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 written permission.

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- 3) When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the World Wide Web.
  
- D) Adherence to the department's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
  - 1) Department personnel may not divulge information (including photographs) 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 this department without express authorization.
  - 2) Department personnel may not divulge information that could be considered a violation of HIPAA.
  - 3) 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:
    - (a) 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;
    - (b) Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
    - (c) Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner
  
- E) Department 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.
  - 1) Department 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.

**VIII) RECORDS, REPORTS, CHARTS**

A) N/A

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