
Department-Sanctioned Social Media

321.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel.

321.2 DEFINITIONS

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

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 integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

Social Networks: Online 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.

Web 2.0: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

321.3 DEPARTMENT-SANCTIONED PRESENCE

Prior to establishing a presence on a social media platform, the Chief and the Public Information Unit should determine a strategy for the presence. Each social media page should include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on

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the website. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website. Based on specific demographics of general users of a particular social media platform, the page(s) may be designed for the target audience(s) such as youth or potential police recruits.

321.4 PROCEDURES

- All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief executive or his or her designee and shall be administered by the departmental information services section or as otherwise determined.
- Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department.
 - Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 - Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- Negative comments about the department or its actions should be allowed and addressed by designated department personnel.
- The Piqua Police Department's intent is not to create a public forum, but to maintain a moderate online discussion directly relating to topics posted by the Department, and reserve the right to delete comments/posts that do not promote appropriate language for citizens, (including minors), to read, consistent with the following criteria:
 - Comments not related to the topic of discussion in post;
 - Comment's and/or posts containing abusive or profane language, sexually explicit language/content, hate speech, derogatory terms or offensive content;
 - Comments that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - Comments that are solicitations of commerce;
 - Comments that endorse candidates or a particular stance on current ballot measures;
 - Comments that conduct or encourage illegal activity;

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- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
- Content that violates a copyright, trademark or other legal ownership interest of any other party.
- Inappropriate comments or language should be deleted after being recorded and retained in accordance with applicable records retention laws. This policy should be listed on the applicable page as a disclaimer so that users clearly understand what will be considered as inappropriate. When possible, designated department personnel may respond to the person who posted the inappropriate comments or language so that they may repost their idea more appropriately. In some cases, a person may be banned from additional posting. Inappropriate content may include:
 - Attacks on individuals
 - Attacks on groups of people
 - Foul language
 - Material incongruent to the mission of the department or the purpose of the page

321.5 DEPARTMENT SANCTIONED USE

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

- Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
- Identify themselves as a member of the department.
- Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
- Not conduct political activities or private business.

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

Covert usage must be specifically authorized by the Chief of Police and will be monitored by at least one supervisor other than the primary operator.

321.6 POTENTIAL USES

Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about

- missing persons;
- wanted persons;

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- gang participation;
- crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking); and
- photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.

Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by

- providing crime prevention tips;
- offering online-reporting opportunities;
- sharing crime maps and data; and
- soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crimestoppers, text-a-tip).

Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to

- road closures,
- special events,
- weather emergencies, and
- missing or endangered persons.

Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.

This department has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.

- Searches should be conducted by a nondecision maker. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.
- Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
- Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
- Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
- Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.