

CITY OF BEND FIRE & RESCUE
POLICY, PROCEDURE, AND INSTRUCTION

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SECTION: Administration

TITLE: Social Media Guidelines

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A. POLICY

- 1) It is the policy of Bend Fire & Rescue (BF&R) to establish guidelines for the use of social media by employees and volunteers, including, but not limited to, social networking sites, blogs, forums and news articles.
- 2) The intent of this policy is to provide guidance to BF&R personnel to avoid illegal or damaging actions, loss of public trust and compromised security related to the use of social media. It is not meant to hinder the use of technology, photos, and video for legitimate work-related purposes, nor is it meant to infringe upon an employee's right to express opinions on matters of public concern.

B. POLICY

- 1) When engaging in the use of social media, all personnel must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Social Media portion of the City Employee Handbook, Section 5.4 (Communications and Software Systems).
 - "You are expected to refrain from any postings that imply you are making a statement on behalf of the City or that disclose the City's confidential information."
- 2) It is the policy of BF&R that the Public Information Officer (PIO)/Communications Manager will be the primary contact for all media contacts and will coordinate the release of all general information concerning BF&R policies, operations, events and news items of community interest, in a timely manner.
 - The community and the news media rely on solid, accurate and official news and information from public entities. Posting items that may appear or imply to be official news creates confusion in the media and thus, in the community. This leads to damage of the trust we have built with the community.

C. PROCEDURE

Definitions

- 1) SOCIAL MEDIA: A broad spectrum of internet platforms and websites including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Nextdoor, Instagram; forums, blogs and news media websites comment sections.

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- 2) BUSINESS PURPOSE: Use of social media to communicate official City information, including incident information, emergency notifications and feature stories, and interaction with community members on social media sites.
- 3) PERSONAL USE: On-duty use of social media sites by a BF&R employee, including access on either personal or City-provided devices.
- 4) ELECTRONIC MEDIA: photos, videos or other recordings captured by BF&R employees acting as agents of the BF&R at the time of capture.

Social Media use for Business Purposes

- 1) BF&R uses social media tools to engage the community, to promote its mission, share information, and build community trust.
- 2) BF&R will not release HIPAA-protected information without express written permission of all the involved parties.
- 3) Electronic media taken by on-duty by personnel cannot be posted to any social media site, unless authorized to do so by BF&R PIO.
 - All photographs (digital and film) and video taken at an incident scene by employees are the property of the City of Bend and must be provided to the BF&R PIO/Communications Manager as soon as practical, upon return to station.
 - Posted electronic media must comply with HIPAA regulations regarding patient privacy, e.g. no patient faces, license plates of other identifying features.
 - Electronic media taken by on-duty employees will be done with appropriate discretion and consideration for the potential emotional impact on the victim/patient, their family and the public.
 - Employees fall under City guidelines and policies which prohibit implying that one is making a statement on behalf of the City, and unauthorized posting of incident scenes is legally considered to be that implication.

Personal use of Social Media by BF&R employees

- 1) BF&R recognizes that many employees engage in social media during off-duty hours.
- 2) Generally, the law allows public sector employees to speak out on “matters of public concern.” BF&R encourages employees to use good judgment related to social media activity.
- 3) General guidelines for personal use of social media by employees:
 - Never release confidential or HIPAA-protected information.
 - Photos taken by a BF&R employee at an incident cannot be posted on a private media site without review by BF&R PIO/Communications Manager.

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- Any photograph posted on an official BF&R site can be “liked,” tagged or copied to a personal site.
- Do not use the BF&R logo on a non-BF&R site in a manner that implies that BF&R endorses or has a business relationship with an individual or company.
- Avoid presenting personal opinions that imply endorsement by BF&R. If necessary, include the disclaimer to the effect: “*The opinions and positions expressed are my own and may not reflect those of Bend Fire and Rescue.*”
- Employees must remain aware of the image conveyed by words and pictures on a personal social media site.
- In addition, remember the following when using a social media site:
 - ♦ Posted information goes out instantly to thousands of people around the world and once posted, cannot be undone.
 - ♦ Posting an incident photo can be seen as a de facto press release.
 - ♦ Information posted on the internet is public. Each employee is responsible for knowing how to use social media and for ensuring that their online profile is one they wish to share publicly.
 - ♦ Social networking site privacy settings should be reviewed to ensure that only approved individuals (“Friends”) have viewing privileges.
 - ♦ “Tagged” photos should be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate. Consider searching and manually removing tags on photos that may not reflect positively on yourself or BF&R.