



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Use of Social Media	SOG #: 2.25
Status: ACTIVE	Written: 01/25/2013
Written by: Hollye B Carpenter	Revised:
Approved by: Hollye B. Carpenter	Adopted: 03/10/2014

PURPOSE

The Northampton County Department of EMS endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity with its employees. This guideline establishes this department's position on the use and management of social media and provides guidelines on the management, administration and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general terms as technology will outpace our ability to discover emerging technology and create policies governing its use.

- 1) The same principles and guidelines that apply to employees in general, apply to activities online. However, due to the nature of the Internet, more accountability is to be expected.
- 2) Social media is largely about connecting, helping others, and having fun.
- 3) Social media is also a valuable resource to learn from and contribute to.
- 4) Social media is more than just Facebook and Twitter. It includes blogs, online networks, and any other Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information.

SCOPE

All members of the Northampton County Department of EMS (NCEMS)

CONTENT

I) PHILOSOPHY

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the EMS department and its personnel in meeting community education, community information, injury prevention, and other related organizational and community objectives. This policy identifies possible uses that may be evaluated and utilized as deemed necessary by EMS administrative and supervisory personnel. This department also recognizes the role that social media tools may play in the personal lives of department personnel. The personal use of social media can have an effect on EMS departmental personnel in their official capacity as medics. This policy is a means to provide guidance of a precautionary nature as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

II) DEFINITIONS

- 1) *Blog:* A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.
- 2) *Post:* Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Use of Social Media	SOG #: 2.25
----------------------------	-------------

- 3) *Profile*: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- 4) *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.)
- 5) *Social Networks*: Platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- 6) *Speech*: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

III) POLICY

Official Department Participation in Social Media

- Each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.
- Social media page(s) shall be designed for the target audience(s) such as the community, civic leadership, employees or potential recruits.
- All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the EMS Director/Chief or designee and shall be administered by same.
- Social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the EMS department and shall have the department logo and contact information prominently displayed.
- Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies of the department and county.
- Social media content is subject to open public records laws.
 - i. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - ii. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- Social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department.
- Social media 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.
- Social media pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
- Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - i. 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.



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Use of Social Media	SOG #: 2.25
----------------------------	-------------

- ii. Do not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
 - iii. Do not conduct political activities or private business.
 - iv. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
- Potential Departmental Uses:
 - i. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when providing information about, but not limited to, the following:
 - road closures,
 - special events,
 - weather emergencies,
 - major ongoing events in the jurisdiction that affects the entire community.
 - employment and volunteer opportunities
 - background checks - for authorized members to conduct a background check on potential employees or volunteers.

Personal Participation in Social Media

- **Precautions**

- 1) Department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - This may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department.
 - 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.

- **Expectations**

- 1) Be helpful and supportive, even while not at work.
- 2) Be respectful to your employers, coworkers, and even competitors. (This includes past, present, and potential coworkers.)
- 3) Each individual is responsible for what they post online, even while not at work.
- 4) Make it clear that the words and thoughts you write online are your own and not your employer's.
- 5) Speak in the first person (I not we) when referring to your work.
- 6) Each individual should choose for themselves if they will use social media.



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Use of Social Media	SOG #: 2.25
----------------------------	-------------

- 7) You are legally liable for anything you write or present online.
 - 8) Employees can be appropriately disciplined and/or sued by the department for commentary, content, videos, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or can create a hostile work environment.
 - 9) Be Respectful and Kind:
 - You are encouraged to share your insights, express your opinion, and share information as appropriate, especially when it is helpful to others.
 - Try to add value to what others are doing and saying.
 - Please post knowledgeably, accurately, and use appropriate professionalism.
 - Be quick to correct your own mistakes and admit when you are wrong.
 - Do not use ethnic slurs, insults, obscenities, etc.
 - Do not engage in conduct that would not be acceptable behavior.
 - Be considerate of others' privacy and topics that could be considered personal, such as religion or politics.
 - Do not pick fights.
- **Identity**
- 1) Please be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy online.
 - 2) Your online presence reflects the department. Be aware that your actions captured via images, videos, posts, or comments can reflect that of the department.
 - 3) Unless given permission by the EMS Director, you are not authorized to speak on behalf of the department, nor represent that you do so.
 - 4) We discourage the use of posting online anonymously, using pseudonyms, or false screen names. We believe in honesty and appropriate transparency.
 - 5) When appropriate, please direct others to the official website and social media accounts of the department.
- **Protect Confidential and Proprietary Information**
- 1) We believe in good communication between employees, partners, customers, and the general public.
 - 2) Never reveal any confidential and/or proprietary information.
 - 3) Never identify customers, partners, or suppliers by name without permission.
 - 4) Do not cite or reference customers, partners, or suppliers without their approval. If you do make a reference, link back to the source if possible.
 - 5) Always respect copyright and trademark laws, including logos.
 - 6) Do not plagiarize others.
 - 7) If you have any question on what has been released to the public, speak with the EMS Director. Do so before releasing information that could potentially harm the department, county, employees, partners, and customers.