

# **ERIE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## **1.08 USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

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### **1.08 USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### **POLICY PURPOSE**

This policy provides a framework for the use of social media for both professional and personal use for employees of this agency. The policy provides employees with guidance to ensure that their use of social media preserves and promotes the professional appearance and integrity of the Erie County Sheriff's Office.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

*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, Instagram, and LinkedIn), microblogging sites (Twitter), photo and video sharing sites (YouTube), blogs and media sites.

*Digital Technology*—all photographs, audio, and video recordings.

*Social Networks*—online platforms where users can create profiles, share information and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

*Blog*—a self-published diary or commentary on a particular that may allow others to post responses, reactions or comments.

*Post*—content an individual shares on any social media site or the act of publishing content on a social media site.

*Profile*—information that a user provides about his/herself on social networking site.

*Page*—the specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrative rights.

*News Media Comment posting*—a section in media posts where readers can provide their reactions or comments to the content.

*Speech*—expression or communication of thought or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related form of communication.

*Employee* – any person employed by the Erie County Sheriff's Office, including volunteers.

#### **POLICY**

All employees of the Erie County Sheriff's Office will follow the below listed guidelines.

Employees are prohibited from posting, placing, or having posted or placed any information relating to their duties, or any information they have learned or obtained as a result of their duties as an employee of the Erie County Sheriff's Office on any social networking site. This shall include:

1. The posting of any pictures, video, audio, comments, discussion, or other digital technology media of any incident, inquiry, investigation, or all other information relating to the Erie County Sheriff's Office.

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2. The posting of any pictures, audio, or any video of any property or equipment owned by this agency that was issued to the employee; including, but not limited to: uniform apparel, badges, patches, cruisers, etc. This shall include any pictures of any employees, whether on or off duty, in any part of his/her uniform or agency owned equipment. This also includes any pictures, images, or artwork of any uniform patch worn by employees of this agency or any other material that refers to the Erie County Sheriff's Office unless the posting of such picture or image is approved in writing by the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy.
3. It is understood that employees may desire to post or place pictures of him/herself or pictures of his/her specific unit to a social networking site for the purpose of promoting the image of the Erie County Sheriff's Office. When an employee desires to post a picture of him/herself, of other employees, or any equipment or property owned by the Erie County Sheriff's he/she will request approval in writing from the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy. When such picture, video, or audio recording has other agency employees or other persons in the item to be posted, the employee making the request shall submit with his/her written or email request, a written memo or email addressed to the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy from each person pictured or recorded, authorizing their picture, or recording, to be posted on a social networking site. No such posting will occur unless written permission has been given by the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy
4. Employees are prohibited from updating, posting any comments, pictures, video, audio, or responding in any way to any comments or inquiries to any social networking site, including their own, while on duty unless such activity is related to an investigation in which a supervisor has knowledge of and has approved this use of social media.
5. Employees are prohibited from posting anything via social media that contains obscene or explicit language, or any sexually explicit language, images or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.
6. Employees are prohibited from posting anything via social media that involves themselves or employees of this agency that reflects behavior that would be reasonably considered reckless or irresponsible.
7. The posting of any pictures, information, alerts or other information to the Erie County Sheriff's Office website or other internet based programs utilized by the Erie County Sheriff's Office to alert the public of important information are only permitted to post information authorized by the Sheriff or the Chief Deputy.

Employees of the Erie County Sheriff's Office while on duty shall never utilize social media or any social networking sites to harass, belittle, ridicule, or criticize an employee or another individual in any manner. The posting of any pictures, video, audio, comments, discussion, or digital media to a social networking site or forwarding or sending an email(s) that criticizes, ridicules, or otherwise may potentially embarrass or disgrace another employee or person is strictly prohibited. This also includes the altering or editing of digital technology that harasses, belittles, or criticizes an employee in any manner. This policy does not prohibit a supervisor(s) from sending an employee a corrective email.

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### **OFF-DUTY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Employees of the Erie County Sheriff's Office must maintain high standards of professional and personal conduct at all times including during the use of social media. Employees utilizing, posting pictures, video, audio, commenting or creating a social media networking site(s), blog(s) and comment oriented websites must conduct themselves at all times in a manner so as not to bring embarrassment, disgrace or doubt as to their credibility as an employee with the Erie County Sheriff's Office.

Any employee who becomes aware of, or has knowledge of a posting, or any website or web page in violation of this policy shall notify his/her supervisor of the violation.