

# Georgia Department of Public Safety

## Policy Manual

SUBJECT <b>INTERNET USE &amp; ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING</b>	POLICY NUMBER <b>14.06</b>
DISTRIBUTION <b>ALL EMPLOYEES</b>	DATE REVISED <b>12/16/2015</b>

### 14.06.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to direct the members of this agency with respect to the use of the internet, the world-wide web, and social networking as a medium of communication impacting the Department of Public Safety.

### 14.06.2 Policy

The internet, blogs, twitter, the worldwide web, social networking sites and any other medium of electronic communication shall not be used in a manner which is detrimental to the mission and function of this agency.

It is essential for every member of this Department to recognize that the proper functioning of any law enforcement agency relies upon the public's confidence and trust in the individual members and this Department to carry out the law enforcement function. Therefore, any matter which brings individual employees or the Department into disrepute has the corresponding effect of reducing public confidence and trust in our Department, thus, impeding our ability to work with and serve the public. Professionalism is the most significant factor in high level performance which in turn builds the public confidence and trust. While employees have the right to use personal/social networking pages or sites, as employees of this Department, they are public servants who are held to a higher standard than the general public with regard to standards of conduct and ethics. As such, the policy of this Department is to maintain a level of professionalism in both on-duty and off-duty conduct that fulfills the mission of our agency. Any publication, through any medium which is potentially adverse to the operation, morale, or efficiency of this agency will be deemed a violation of this policy.

### 14.06.3 Procedures

- A. Members of this Department are prohibited from using agency computers for any unauthorized purpose including participating in social networking sites or searching for, visiting or receiving, downloading any sites containing any written, pictorial, audio, or other depiction of information that might be considered offensive or disruptive in nature. Included in this category are sites containing material one may reasonably construe to be sexual in nature.
- B. Members of this Department are prohibited from posting, or in any other way broadcasting, without prior agency approval, information on the internet, or other medium of communication, regarding the business of this agency to include but not limited to:
  1. Photographs/images relating to any investigation of this Department.

2. Video or audio files related to any investigation of this Department.
  3. Video, audio, photographs or any other images, etc. which memorialize a law enforcement related action of this Department.
  4. Logos/uniforms/badges or other items which are symbols associated with this Department.
  5. Any other item or material which is identifiable to this Department.
- C. Members of this Department who utilize social networking sites, blogs, twitter or other mediums of electronic communication in their off-duty time shall maintain an appropriate level of professionalism and appropriate conduct so as not to broadcast in a manner which is detrimental to the mission and function of this Department.
1. Members may utilize personal social media accounts to follow/connect with Departmentally sanctioned accounts. Members shall understand that all activity and comments are subject to Departmental policy.
  2. No personal social media accounts shall be created using a Departmental email address, unless authorized by the Commissioner.
  3. Members shall not use references in these social networking sites or other mediums of communication that in any way represent themselves as a member of this Department without prior Departmental approval. This shall include but not be limited to:
    - a. Text which identifies the Department.
    - b. Photos that depict the logos, patches, badge or other identifying symbol of this Department.
    - c. Accounts of enforcement actions which occur within this Department,
    - d. Any other material, text, audio, video, photograph, or image which would be identifiable to this Department.
  4. Members may "Like", "Share", and comment on posts made on Departmental Sanctioned Social Media Sites.
  5. Members shall not use a social networking site or other medium of internet communication to post any materials of a sexually graphic nature.
  6. Members shall not use a social networking site or other medium of internet communication to post any materials which promote violence or unlawful use of weaponry.
  7. Members shall not use a social networking site or other medium of communication to post or broadcast any materials which would be detrimental to the mission and function of this Department.
  8. Members shall not create funding (i.e. gofundme, bank account, etc.) accounts in relation to their employment with the Department of Public Safety unless authorized by the Commissioner.

- D. Members who wish to participate in professional networking sites may seek written approval from their Division Director to identify themselves as a member of the Department on the site. Approval must be granted prior to use of the site and must clearly state which site(s) will be utilized.
- E. Members of this Department are prohibited from using their title as well as any reference to this Department in any correspondence to include emails, postings, blogs, twitter, social network sites such as Facebook, unless the communication is of an official nature and is serving the mission of the Department. Signature lines may be used on Department email accounts but are prohibited on personal email accounts. A member with a business need to utilize title or refer to the Department may seek approval from his or her Division Director.
- F. Administrative Investigations: Members who are subject to administrative investigations may be ordered to provide the agency with access to the social networking site when subject of the investigation is directly, narrowly, and specifically related to the employee's performance or ability to perform his or her function within the agency or when the subject of the investigation is potentially adverse to the operation, morale or efficiency of the Department.

#### **14.06.4 Reporting Requirement**

- A. All employees of the Department, including consultants or contractors doing work for the Department, are required to immediately report any violations or alleged violations of this policy through their normal chain of command. Alleged violations of this policy shall be investigated thoroughly, and disciplinary corrective action shall be taken where deemed appropriate.