



Department of Emergency Communications

City of Richmond, VA

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Series: I - Administrative

Number: ADMIN 1-40

Subject:

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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References:

City of Richmond Personnel Rules
City of Richmond Administrative Regulations – 2.5
Electronic Media Systems

CALEA Standard(s):

CALEA Standards for Public Safety Communications:

Signature of Approval:

Stephen M. Willoughby, Director

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the management and administration of the official accounts established by the City of Richmond's Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) on social media to communicate information to the public. This policy does not address employees' personal use of social media, which is covered by the City of Richmond Admin. Reg. 2.5 Electronic Media Systems, and by DEC's Training Policy 5-07 Staff Development Training.

II. POLICY:

Social media offers the opportunity for the DEC to communicate directly to members of the public. With this opportunity comes potential risk to the organization's reputation as well as possible legal and security risks. Adherence to this policy will help to reduce these risks. Adherence to this policy also will assist in helping to create a positive public image of DEC, educate the public and recruit potential employees by providing accurate, timely and consistent information.

II. PROCEDURES:

A. Goals and Objectives

1. Social media usage by the DEC will support DEC's mission by providing accurate and timely information to assist in:
 - a. Developing a positive public image of DEC
 - b. Educating the public about DEC and 911
 - c. Encouraging potential candidates to consider a career with DEC
 - d. Recognizing positive employee performance

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Official Use Only

- e. Promoting transparency in city government by addressing deficiencies when applicable.
 - f. Advising the public about real-time incidents, city services, crime and fire prevention opportunities and others that could help to reduce the number of calls to the PSAP.
- 2. The focus of social media posts should be on what the DEC is doing and what is unique to the DEC, such as the number of requests for assistance that the DEC managed during a major incident, rather than on fire, police or EMS actions.
 - 3. Social media sites should be updated at least once per day and as often as needed to keep citizens informed during major events without being inundated with information.

B. Accountability

- 1. Employees are responsible for their own conduct and postings on social media. All employees are responsible for following City of Richmond Administration Regulations, other city and departmental policies pertaining to use of social media, and applicable laws, regulations and policies. Failure to comply may result in corrective action.
- 2. The DEC's Marketing and Public Relations Specialist or designee is responsible for monitoring official DEC accounts and other social media accounts that might mention or involve the DEC on a daily basis during working hours. Supervisors may be designated for after-hours monitoring. Possible infractions will be forwarded to the employee's supervisor for investigation.

C. Rules and Regulations

- 1. Etiquette and engagement
 - a. Messages should be worded in a professional, yet conversational and friendly style that the average person can understand and relate to. Jargon, abbreviations, codes and acronyms should be avoided in favor of plain language.
 - b. Care should be used to ensure that people of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities and abilities are welcomed and represented as much as possible on the DEC's social media accounts.
 - c. Consistency should be maintained as much as possible in voice, tone and style, so that the department appears to speak with "one voice."

2. Confidentiality

- a. Employees will not post confidential, sensitive or copyrighted information or images that they have access to due to their employment with the city and the DEC, including information related to ongoing police or fire investigations.
- b. Personal information, such as names, exact addresses and telephone numbers related to events will not be posted on social media.

3. Images/videos/graphics

Only high-quality photos, videos and graphics that help to further the DEC's mission and goals should be posted. DEC-created images featuring DEC staff members are preferred. When these are not available, employees are encouraged to consult with the Marketing and Public Relations Specialist to select appropriate, available images that do not violate copyright laws.

4. DEC will follow all records management guidance provided by the Library of Virginia regarding the retention of public records of posts to social networking sites.

D. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Establishing accounts

- a. The Marketing and Public Relations Specialist is responsible for establishing and maintaining official accounts on behalf of the DEC and at the discretion of the director or designee.
- b. Other DEC employees, members of the public or groups may NOT establish official DEC accounts or another online presence representing DEC without the written consent of the director or designee.
- c. The Marketing and Public Relations Specialist may designate other DEC employees as account administrators to help monitor and maintain accounts or to assist with any technical issues and information security.
- d. Account administrators are advised to maintain professional accounts for the purpose of maintaining and monitoring the DEC accounts that are separate from their personal social media accounts. In addition, their personal accounts should include an employee disclaimer such as, "Views expressed are mine, and do not reflect those of my employer."

2. Message and posting approval

- a. Communication Officer Supervisors and above are authorized to post information, photos, videos and other types of information, including replies to public comments and questions, on behalf of the DEC on the departmental social media accounts.
- b. Authorized personnel should maintain professional accounts for use in posting on behalf of the DEC that are separate from their personal social media accounts.
- c. All posts must be approved in advance of being made public by the Marketing and Public Relations Specialist or designee.

3. Training

- a. The Marketing and Public Relations Specialist may provide training to staff on the most appropriate and effective methods of using social media to achieve DEC's goals.
- b. DEC's Information Technology (IT) staff may provide technical and security training and assistance.

4. Posts, comments and private messages from the public

- a. DEC welcomes comments and sharing of photos and videos from members of the public on DEC social media accounts to help further the goals of engaging and educating citizens, recruiting candidates and sharing information to help the community.
- b. Posts that do not help to further these goals or are deemed inappropriate may be removed by account administrators. Examples of inappropriate content may include, but are not limited to:
 - Profane, obscene or pornographic content
 - Threats to any person or organization
 - Personal attacks
 - Solicitation of commerce, including, but not limited to, advertising for a product or business
 - Content unrelated to DEC or the Richmond, Virginia, community
 - Conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law
- c. When content is deleted, the administrator who removed it should send a message to the person or account that posted the content providing the reason it was removed and explaining the consequences of posting other

inappropriate content. Screen shots of the content should be made before removal, as well as the warning message, and placed into a folder accessible to other administrators. If the same account posts inappropriate content again, that account may be blocked from posting content on DEC sites or from being a fan of DEC sites.

- d. Posts expressing a negative statement of DEC actions or staff or criticisms may be constructive for the departmental improvement. Oftentimes those posting negative comments want to be listened to and to have their opinions and issues acknowledged. Responding with a message such as, “We are sorry to hear that (address their feeling rather than DEC’s action or inaction). The Richmond Department of Emergency Communications values the feedback it receives from the community and is dedicated to providing the best emergency and non-emergency communication service possible to all of Richmond’s citizens. We encourage you to file a complaint, so that we may properly address your issue. Complaints may be filed by calling 804-646-5911.”
- e. Social media pages will include a statement that specifies its purpose and scope and provides a link to the DEC’s website and other information. Pages should include a statement that opinions expressed by visitors do not reflect the opinions of DEC.

5. Customer service

To help present a positive public view of the DEC and to recruit job candidates, all comments and questions posted by members of the public on DEC social media accounts or sent by private message will receive a reply within 24 hours. If it is not possible to provide an answer to the question within 24 hours, the question should be acknowledged and a reasonable estimate of the time needed to provide the reply or other actions needed should be provided.

E. Potential Legal Risks

1. Crediting sources

Photos, videos, graphics and other content are subject to copyright laws and cannot be simply copied and pasted from other sites for use on DEC social media accounts without permission. When possible, photos, videos and graphics created by DEC should be posted. When these are not available, purchased stock photography or content with Creative Commons or certain other types of licensing may be used instead. Before posting, employees should consult with the Marketing and Public Relations Specialist on finding the best images and video to post.

2. Privacy and disclosure procedures

Employees will not post confidential, sensitive or copyrighted information that they have access to due to their employment with the city and DEC, including information from ongoing police or fire investigations. Critical or sensitive criminal justice information, details on victims and medical information should not be posted.

F. Potential Security Risks

1. As with other technology, DEC social media accounts may be at risk of phishing scams, ransomware attacks and other potential security threats, so employees must be vigilant in protecting DEC's online presence by following all of the City of Richmond guidelines related to Computer and Information Security.
2. Any security breach or attack should be reported immediately to DEC IT staff, the Marketing and Public Relations Specialist and/or designee, and supervisors.

G. Requests for assistance and exchange of information

1. Richmond DEC will not be monitored by Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) personnel, so the public should not expect a response. The public should not use the social networking sites for immediate emergency response from the PSAP and should not post or send requests for assistance through social media. The PSAP should be contacted by calling 911 for emergencies or by calling 804-646-5100 for non-emergencies. This information will be prominently displayed on all social media sites.
2. Members of the public who post requests for assistance should be advised to call 911 and the information should be forwarded to the email group for Communications Officer Supervisors and Assistant Communications Officer Supervisors as soon as possible.
3. Information posted on DEC social media accounts or sent to accounts through private messages that might be beneficial to police, fire or EMS services in Richmond or other jurisdictions should be forwarded to the email group for Communications Officer Supervisors and Assistant Communications Officer Supervisors as soon as possible.