

LAKE CARMEL FIRE DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1 – PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The improper use of social media can undermine the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Lake Carmel Fire Department and its members, and can impact our ability to effectively deliver life-saving services. As such, this Policy applies to both official and personal use of social media by Lake Carmel Fire Department members. All members are reminded that they are accountable for their conduct while on duty and are accountable for off duty conduct when it could reasonably be expected to be disruptive of the workplace or agency operations, or bring the agency into disrepute.

2 – DEFINITION:

- 2.1 "Social media" is defined as virtual communities and networks used to exchange information that includes but is not limited to messaging and data transmission, blogging and/or photo video-sharing and audio recordings. Social media includes proprietary sites or applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube and Twitter, websites and other content-rich sites, instant messaging, video conferencing and collaboration services such as Wikipedia or any emergent social media platform or service.
- 2.2 Common social media outlets to which this Policy applies include, but are not limited to:
 - 2.2.1 Social networking platforms: A social networking platform allows users to connect with other users and create profiles online with status updates, photos, videos, messaging and other features (e.g., Facebook).
 - 2.2.2 Blogs: A blog is an online journal to which the host regularly posts material on which other users can comment; some blogs, such as microblogs, limit entries to short, text-message-like entries (e.g., Twitter).
 - 2.2.3 Video or image-sharing outlets: A video or image-sharing outlet is an online platform on which users can upload, share and view video clips or digital images (e.g., YouTube or Instagram).
 - 2.2.4 RSS feeds: An RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed is an online alert system that notifies subscribers of new content on a website.

- 2.2.5 Podcasts: A podcast is an audio file that has been published on the internet and can be downloaded to a computer or a mobile-listening device.
- 2.2.6 Websites: A set of interconnected web pages, usually including a homepage, generally located on the same server, and prepared and maintained as a collection of information by a person, group, or organization.

3 – POLICY:

- 3.2.1 Lake Carmel Fire Department members are responsible for what they write or post on social media. Activities and statements made on social media sites are done in an online domain where users have no reasonable expectation of privacy. Even if a Lake Carmel Fire Department member has created "private" or "limited access" accounts or has customized "privacy settings", any statements, photographs, video clips or any other information that is sent over the internet may still be viewed and disseminated by third parties, even after the content has been edited or deleted by the user. Whether intended to be private or not, postings will be available on the web for a long time and may spread to large audiences by re-posting, sometimes without the knowledge or consent of the original poster. Before posting, consideration should be given to whether the post will disrupt operations or bring the Department or any of its members into disrepute if viewed by officers, board of directors, members of the department or members of the public.
- 3.2.2 Members participating in social media are subject to all applicable Department policies even when using social media while off duty or not at the Lake Carmel Fire Department. Department policy prohibits engaging in conduct tending to bring the Lake Carmel Fire Department into disrepute, including engaging in harassing or discriminatory conduct. Engaging in such behavior on-line, even in a personal capacity, may subject a member to disciplinary action. In addition, all postings on social media must comply with all laws and Lake Carmel Fire Department policies regarding the confidentiality of information.
- 3.2.3 Members may not use the Lake Carmel Fire Department's logo or name (e.g., Lake Carmel Fire Department) in any postings or feature the logo or name on any web page (e.g., a website/social media banner or profile photo) for commercial purposes.

- 3.2.4 Lake Carmel Fire Department members shall not post photographs or videos of themselves Lake Carmel Fire Department attire (e.g., bunker gear, Emergency Medical Service gear and / or Lake Carmel Fire Department attire) unless the photograph or video portrays the department in a positive manner.
- 3.2.5 Members are prohibited from posting on the Internet nonpublic information (e.g., H.I.P.P.A), that was obtained as a result of their position with the Department.
- 3.2.6 Members currently using social media must immediately ensure that all of their personal social media pages, sites and outlets are reviewed and in compliance with the regulations set forth in this Policy.
- 3.2.7 Members are prohibited from engaging in any type of social media contact (e.g., "friending" or "following") with minors with whom they interact in the course of their Lake Carmel Fire Department membership except members of the explorers. Such unauthorized communications may be deemed inappropriate and create an appearance of impropriety.
- 3.2.8 Members are prohibited from posting their own Lake Carmel Fire Department company or unit websites or other media sites, without prior authorization from the Board of Directors.
- 3.2.9 Members who identify themselves as members of Lake Carmel Fire Department, or hold positions with the Lake Carmel Fire Department that are known to the general public, must make sure that their profile, comments and other postings are consistent with all policies rules and regulations.
- 3.2.10 Violations of this Policy may subject members to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Department.