

VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make employees and other persons who use Valley Fire District technology aware of their responsibilities when using social media. Employees should be aware of the potential consequences of violating this policy whether on or off duty. The purpose of this policy is also to protect the interests of the District, the privacy of employees, and protect private information about members of the public served by Valley Fire District where applicable. This policy is also intended to ensure efficient use of employee time and to minimize distractions from an employee's assigned tasks and duties and to assist employees in making informed decisions concerning the appropriate use of social media. What is said online comes under close scrutiny by others, especially when a communication involves public employees. This policy is intended to protect employees from unintended consequences of inappropriate social media posts and protect the District from harm to its reputation that can result from such posts.

This policy also establishes that only authorized individuals are permitted to post on the District's official media sites or speak on behalf of the District when posting on social media.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Valley Fire District employees (including but not limited to volunteer firefighters) whether on or off duty, regardless of using Valley Fire District or personal technology, and to any person using Valley Fire District equipment (phones, computers, networks, internet connections, etc.). For purposes of this policy, the term "Social Media" includes websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking.

Nothing in this policy should be construed as denying employees their civil or political liberties under the U.S. and State of Ohio Constitutions. Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with any rights under the National Labor Relations Act.

III. OFFICIAL DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- A. The establishment of any Valley Fire District social media account must be authorized by the Board. Any questions regarding District Social Media accounts should be directed to the Board.
- B. Posting on Valley Fire District Social Media sites may only be executed by authorized users, as determined by the Board ("Authorized Users").
- C. Annually, each officer shall provide the Board with a list of Authorized Users. Any changes in the status of an Authorized User must be coordinated with the Board.
- D. When using official Valley Fire District Social Media, Authorized Users shall comply with the commenting policy set forth in the attached Exhibit A.
- E. Employees who are responsible for maintaining and posting on any District approved Social Media site must have knowledge of the District's record retention obligations and comply with those obligations. In general, there are very limited circumstances in which content posted on Valley Fire District Social Media sites should be deleted by District employees.

- F. The Board should be consulted for further guidance prior to content being deleted other than in keeping with the policy described in Exhibit A.

IV. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AT WORK

- A. Social Media use shall not interfere with the performance of job duties.
- B. No person shall use District-issued electronics (desktops, laptops, cell phones, etc.) to post, view, or engage with Social Media unless they are an Authorized User or the usage is specifically permitted as a part of that person's job duties.
- C. Authorized Users are expected to comply with "Terms of Use" of social media platforms.

V. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

- A. Prohibited conduct for both on-duty and off-duty conduct as applicable, is set forth below. This includes, but is not limited to the following behavior on Social Media:
 - 1) Disclosure of confidential information, proprietary information, and/or information that is prohibited from release by law.
 - 2) The use of an employee's or any Valley Fire District email address to register on social media or other online tools utilized for personal use.
 - 3) Sharing content that is sexual, obscene, violent, or pornographic in nature, in connection with any reference to the District or the individual's employment with the District.
 - 4) Conduct or encourage illegal activity.
 - 5) Promote, foster or perpetuate discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, disability, marital status, familial status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or military status.
 - 6) Threaten, intimidate, or harass any individual.
 - 7) Incite or promote violence.
 - 8) Defame any individual, group or organization.
 - 9) Share information or images that reasonably could compromise individual or public safety, or privacy rights.
 - 10) Attribute personal statements, opinions, or beliefs to the Valley Fire District or do anything to give the false impression that the employee is representing the District in such personal statements.
 - 11) Conduct public business or make official statements as a representative of the District via personal social media accounts (including private or direct messages), unless so authorized.
 - 12) Retaliating for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation.
 - 13) Post statements or images that disrupt District operations.

VI. ADVISEMENTS

- A. Employees assume any and all risk associated with their off-duty personal/private blogging and use of social media. Remember, what is shared may be available permanently and publicly—even if you think you did not share it publicly or attempt to modify or delete it.
- B. Statements made on social media that affect the workplace may be investigated under any relevant District policy including, but not limited to, the use of District-owned property policy, anti-harassment/sexual harassment/non-discrimination policies, computer usage policy, and the equal employment opportunity policy.
- C. Work-related complaints are more likely to be resolved in the workplace than by posting on social media. The District encourages employees to follow the applicable internal complaint procedures rather than using Social Media to voice work-related complaints.
- D. If an employee can be easily identified with, or identifies himself or herself as, a Valley Fire District employee on a social media profile, the employee is encouraged to make clear that the views expressed on the account are their own and do not reflect the views of the Valley Fire District. However, the use of such a disclaimer does not prevent statements or posts from being the basis of disciplinary action. Employees are not absolved of their responsibility to comply with this policy simply by using such a disclaimer.
- E. Communications related to public business may meet the definition of a record under Ohio’s Public Records Law (and therefore possibly be subject to review and release) even if the communication is on the employee’s personal account.
- F. This policy may be amended from time to time.
- G. Employees are expected to comply with the law and all other District policies when using social media platforms.

VII. CONSEQUENCES OF A POLICY VIOLATION

Violation of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Violations of law or other policies that occur through social media usage may also result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Established: February 14, 2020

Last Updated: February 14, 2020

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Valley Fire District Social Media Policy and its Exhibit A.

Signature

Date

Print Name