



# SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL MANUAL



## Procedure 330 – Social Media

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### ***.01 INTRODUCTION***

This procedure establishes guidelines regarding appropriate content for personal, social networking websites, web pages and other electronically transmitted or hard copied material with respect to the use of the San Antonio Police Department’s images, material, logos, video, data, information, or references to those entities. The purpose is to ensure that members use appropriate discretion in the use of information and references to the San Antonio Police Department so as not to discredit the department; to safeguard the release of information to unauthorized persons regarding crimes, accidents, police incidents or police training; and to confirm that all members treat the official business of the Department as confidential as applicable by law or departmental policy. This policy is not intended to obstruct the professional development of any member or to infringe upon any member’s protected rights to include communication, speech, or expression. Lastly, this policy serves to remind all members that any unsolicited information brought to the Department’s attention may be used by the Department for administrative purposes as applicable to standing rules, regulations, policies, practices, and procedures.

### ***.02 DISCUSSION***

All members of the San Antonio Police Department are reminded that integrity, ethics, and professionalism are paramount staples in the law enforcement community. Members are held to the department’s elevated standards of conduct whether on or off duty. All members must avoid any conduct which would compromise the integrity of the Department; undermine the public’s confidence in this agency; compromise operational and officer security; and/or adversely affect ongoing criminal, civil, or disciplinary cases; or bring reproach or liability upon the Department as a whole.

### ***.03 TERMINOLOGY:***

- A. **BLOG:** A commentary or self-published journal allowing visitors to post comments, feedback, or reactions.
- B. **COMMENT:** Expressing a reaction or opinion on a webpage through remarks, in text, or video.
- C. **CONCERTED ACTIVITY:** Activity that is protected under federal labor law.
- D. **DATA EXTRACTION:** The process of extracting and/or finding pertinent data from an array of social media and internet related sources. This process can be used as an investigative tool due to the frequency of persons often posting information about crimes they have committed on social media websites.
- E. **FOLLOW:** Term closely associated with social media websites, referring to one being able to see others updates in their personal timeline. Followers are people who receive updates (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- F. **OFF-DUTY:** Time frame outside of a regular tour of duty and/or assigned duties.
- G. **ON-DUTY:** A regular tour of duty and/or assigned duties, participant in a special assignment for the department, or when an incident occurs requiring members to act in the capacity of a police officer.
- H. **PAGE:** A particular section of a social media website where the material included is managed and displayed by an individual(s) with administrator rights.
- I. **PODCAST:** A program (audio or video) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet



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- J. **POST:** An item inserted into a blog, or an entry to any type of computerized bulletin board, forum, or social media site; the act of creating, uploading, editing or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, photographs, audio, video, or any other multimedia file.
- K. **SOCIAL MEDIA:** On-line sources that allow people to communicate, share, and/or exchange information with others via some form of on-line or cellular network platform. Information may include, but is not limited to, text, photographs, video, audio, and other multimedia files.
- L. **SOCIAL NETWORKING:** The development of social and professional contacts; the sharing of information and services among people with a common interest.
- M. **SPEECH:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- N. **TWEET:** A posted message on the social networking website Twitter.
- O. **VLOG:** Similar to a blog except it is presented as video instead of text.
- P. **WEB SITE:** A site (location) on the World Wide Web (www). Each web site contains a home page, which is the first document users see when they enter the site. The site might also contain additional documents and files. Each site is owned and managed by an individual, company, or organization. This is a broadly used term generically covering the various social media sites as well as news, information, and other similarly organized locations on the World Wide Web.
- Q. **WIKI:** Web pages that can be edited collaboratively. Wikipedia is a well known example, but wiki can be dedicated to any topic.

### ***.04 POLICY***

It is the policy of the San Antonio Police Department that all existing laws, rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and directives that govern on and off duty conduct are applicable to conduct associated with a member's use or participation with social media and networking. When engaging in social networking, to include but not limited to YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., members will strictly adhere to any and all directives listed within this policy. The San Antonio Police Department recognizes two general categories of social media usage among members. These categories include departmental use of social media and personal use of social media.

#### ***A. Department-Authorized Use of Social Media***

The use of social media for the specific purpose of assisting the Department and its personnel in community outreach, problem solving, investigation, crime prevention, and/or other Department related objectives may be done only with prior written authorization by the Chief of Police or his designee. Members seeking to represent the Department via social media outlets **shall** obtain written permission from the Chief of Police, or his/her designee, prior to engaging in such activity. In addition to the General Manual, SOPs, and rules and regulations set forth in the City of San Antonio-Social Media Directive (AD 6.15), the following provisions **shall** apply to department-authorized use of social media upon obtaining authorization:

1. Properly identify themselves as a member of the Department except in instances whereby proper identification poses a risk to officer safety or may impede the progress of a criminal investigation. Members with permission from the Chief of Police or his/her designee may exclude Department membership from their profiles.
2. At all times, conduct themselves as representatives of the Department and, accordingly, adhere to all policies, procedures, standards of conduct, and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
3. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.



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4. Department members **shall** not under any circumstances make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions in accordance with GM Section 200, *Rules and Regulations* and Procedure 307, *Public and Media Information*.

### ***B. Personal Use of Social Media***

1. There is no reasonable expectation of privacy when engaging in social networking online while using City assets or during a member's working hours. As such, the content of social networking websites may be obtained for use in criminal trials, civil proceedings, and administrative investigations.
2. Members are prohibited from posting, transmitting, and/or disseminating any pictures, recordings, or videos of official Department training, activities, or work-related assignments without written permission of the Chief of Police or designee, through the Public Information Office (PIO). Furthermore, members are prohibited from posting, transmitting, and/or disseminating any pictures, recordings, information, or videos that are in violation of any provisions of the General Manual, and/or information that is not deemed as a "concerted activity" as defined by the National Labor Relations Board.
3. Any member becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provisions of this policy **shall** immediately notify his/her supervisor, in writing, for follow-up action.
4. Sites deemed inappropriate, whether an employment association or not, bringing discredit to this Department or to a member, or promoting or encouraging misconduct, whether on or off duty, may be investigated in accordance with GM Proc. 303, *Disciplinary Procedures*.
5. All members **shall** treat the official business of the Department as confidential and will comply with GM Section 200, *Rules and Regulations* and Proc. 307, *Public and Media Information*.
6. Members **shall** state that the views and opinions expressed on a social media site are the member's personal views and not those of the San Antonio Police Department by incorporating a disclaimer indicating this on their personal page.
7. Members are prohibited from using ethnic slurs, profanity, personal insults, and material harassing in nature, defamatory, fraudulent, or discriminatory, or other content or communications that would not be acceptable in a City workplace under City or agency policy or practice.
8. Members are prohibited from displaying or posting sexually explicit images, videos, cartoons, jokes, messages or other material that would be considered violations of the City policy preventing sexual harassment in the work place and/or GM Proc. 918, *Harassment / Discrimination in the Workplace*.
9. Members shall not post, share, text, "tweet," photos; comments; videos; or other representations of police related calls, incidents, scenes or training without the prior approval of the Chief of Police or Police Media Services; unless such posting or sharing is for a legitimate police or investigative purpose.