

# Enfield Fire District No. 1

## Social Media Policy

**Scope:** This standard operating policy shall apply to all Enfield Fire District personnel to include all employees, members and commissioners (Fire District personnel) when using any social media platform including, but not limited to, all forms of instant messaging, texting, paging and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Linked In, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and any other current or future information sharing services, websites, and/or blogs.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this SOP is to provide guidance to Fire District personnel in clarifying the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate use of social media. Inappropriate use of social media may lead to actual harm to the Fire District and/or the Fire Department in terms of the public's perception of the organization's willingness to render services to them.

1. Engaging in social media and social networking activities is a form of speech.
2. Nothing in this policy is intended to unlawfully restrict an individual's right to discuss, as a private citizen, matters of public concern or engage in concerted activity with co-workers.
3. Fire District personnel have an affirmative obligation to avoid being perceived as a spokesperson for the Fire District and/or the Fire Department except when duly authorized.
4. Fire District personnel are prohibited from engaging in speech that causes actual harm or disruption to the mission and function of the Fire District or Fire Department.

**Spokesperson for the Fire District/Fire Department:** is an employee, member or commissioner who makes a statement on behalf of the District or Department in his/her capacity as an employee, member or commissioner of the District or Department; or in such a way that it may reasonably be attributed to the District or Department as opposed to making a statement as a private citizen. The authorized spokespersons for the District are the President or his designee, the Fire Chief or his designee, and in certain matters that pertain to fire cause and origin, fire investigation and the fire code, the Fire Marshal or his designee. The specific spokespersons for Enfield Fire Department operations are the Fire Chief or his designee or the Deputy Fire Chief or his designee. The spokesperson for the Enfield Volunteer Firefighters' Association is the Association President or his designee.

**Harassment:** is the systematic and/or continued unwelcome actions of one person or group intended to demean, threaten, intimidate, or alarm another person or group.

**Hate Speech:** is speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes including race, ethnic origin, national origin, skin color, gender (including status as pregnant and/or nursing), gender expression, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation and is indicative of intolerance or hostility that is incompatible with a commitment to serve all members of the community. Included is speech that threatens violence directed toward any person or group; encourages others to commit violence or harm directed toward any person or group; or threatens to or encourages others to withhold public safety services from any person or group.

1. No employee, member or commissioner, while speaking as a private citizen on a matter of public concern, shall speak in such a way as to cause actual harm or disruption to the mission and functions of the Fire District or Fire Department.

**2.** Employees, members or commissioners may speak on a matter of public concern as a spokesperson for the Fire District or Fire Department only with the express permission of the Fire Commission or Fire Chief. Employees, members or commissioners shall not represent themselves as spokespersons for the Fire District or Fire Department unless duly authorized to do so. Employees, members or commissioners may inadvertently represent themselves as District/Department spokespersons by such means as the use of the Fire District or Fire Department name or acronym in personal screennames, personal email addresses, photos, logos, or patches on a website, and shall not do so unless a disclaimer is provided. The use of titles, FD logos, FD-owned images or identification as an employee, member or commissioner of the District/Department in social media that creates the perception that the person is speaking as a spokesperson for the District/ Department as opposed to speaking as a private citizen is prohibited, unless doing so is with other employees and/or employee representatives, and is for the purpose of engaging in concerted activities related to workplace issues.

**3.** Employees, members and commissioners are prohibited from publicly discussing Fire District/Department matters that are not a matter of public concern, unless doing so is for the purpose of engaging in concerted activities relative to workplace issues.

**4.** Employees, members and commissioners shall not engage in speech that is false, deceptive, libelous, slanderous, misleading or causes harm to others, including speech that constitutes hate speech or harassment, nor shall employees, members or commissioners discuss protected or confidential matters of the District/Department including;

- matters that are under investigation
- patient and employee/member/commissioner information protected by HIPAA/medical confidentiality laws
- personnel matters that are protected from disclosure by law

All employees, members and commissioners shall maintain a level of professionalism in both on-duty and off-duty conduct that is consistent with the mission of the Enfield Fire District/Enfield Fire Department when engaging in social media or social networking activities.

In situations where a line of duty death, injury, illness or accident has occurred; any expressions of condolences, sympathy, etc. should be avoided until the victim's family (next of kin) has been notified.

The release of District/Department-owned digital images, audio or video is prohibited without the approval of the Fire Chief or his designee. This applies to imagery created by personnel using District-owned equipment.

The use or release of sexually explicit or illegal material is strictly prohibited.

Employees and members are prohibited from social networking via electronic and/or video-based social media while on duty unless it is necessary for their job functions or responsibilities. Personal communications with family members are allowed in circumstances of personal family well-being.

Participating in social networking or using video-based social media when off-duty from Fire District facilities or apparatus (i.e., using District facilities, apparatus, or equipment as a backdrop) is not allowed without written permission from the Fire Chief or his designee. Participating in social networking while identifiable as a member or employee of the Fire District or Fire Department, whether on or off duty, and whether in full uniform or partial uniform is prohibited unless duly authorized.