

Chapter V Personal Behavior**Subject 1 SOCIAL MEDIA****506.00 Purpose**

The Cincinnati Fire Department acknowledges that use of technology by emergency service organizations provides several worthwhile benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization and its' members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public relations purposes. To that end, the Cincinnati Fire Department embraces the use of instant technology.

506.01 Policy

- A. All Fire Department members shall abide by the rules of social media and instant technology use outlined within this procedure.
- B. All Fire Department members shall abide by the social media rules, policies, procedures and guidelines pertaining to all City of Cincinnati employees and outlined in Administrative Regulation #59.

506.03 Scope

- A. This policy applies to all employees of the Cincinnati Fire Department.
- B. This policy applies to volunteers, consultants and contractors performing business on behalf of the Cincinnati Fire Department.
- C. This policy applies to the posts of others and tied to a members account. Liking and sharing posts that violate this policy are considered the same as posting them yourself.
- D. For the purposes of this policy, the term instant technology is defined as resources including, but not limited to, cell phone use, instant messaging, texting, paging and social networking sites such as Facebook, Snap Chat, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.
- E. The Fire Chief or his designee shall approve all Fire Department social media pages. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations and policies including the records management and retention requirements set by law and regulation.

506.05 Objective

To establish basic, prudent and reasonable standards required for Cincinnati Fire Department members to utilize social media.

506.07 Rules for Social Media

The internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The Cincinnati Fire Department is not responsible for information found within these sources. The Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) understands the value of such technology, but also understands the concerns and issues raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns or portrays this organization to the public in an illegal or negative manner (intentionally or unintentionally).

This policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as a public entity, it has been put in place to protect the rights of the Cincinnati Fire Department, its' members and the public we are sworn to protect. Members and employees are advised that their speech, directly or by any means of instant technology, either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that has a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities may not be protected under the First Amendment.

Under the basic concept of constitutional law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. Personal workplace grievances however are not a matter of public concern. In that regard, members and employees must adhere to the following guidelines when discussing The Cincinnati Fire Department and/or commenting on, or referencing any CFD or City of Cincinnati personnel on social media websites.

- A. **No information, videos or pictures gathered while in uniform on CFD business (including but not limited to: uncontrolled emergency responses, meetings, drills, special event details, training, inspections, grocery shopping, etc), may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire Chief or his designee. The member's District Fire Chief may approve photos for posting however the approval must be documented through e-mail. The District Fire Chief must make sure the content conforms to Section 506.07.**

Photos of special fire department gatherings (Awards Banquet, Fire Fighter's Memorial, retirement luncheons) may be posted as long as they conform to all regulations contained within Section 506.07

Under this restriction, members and employees are prohibited from disseminating or transmitting in any fashion, photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical assistance, or any photographs or images of persons or details of any fire, vehicle accident, or other emergency hazard scene. Any such transmission may violate Ohio State Laws and/or the HIPPA privacy rights of private citizens and may result in criminal and/or civil proceeding being initiated against members and employees violating the provision of the policy.

- B. Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Cincinnati Fire Department, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affects the public

perception of the Cincinnati Fire Department will be disciplined. Further, dissemination of sensitive or personal information through an electronic medium may be subject to discovery through legal means and may expose the City of Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Fire Department, and the individual forwarding such personal or sensitive information, to lawsuits and legal liability.

- C. Do not make disparaging or false statements or use profane language.
- D. Do not publish any material that impairs Department discipline and harmony among co-workers.
- E. Do not publish any material that negatively affects the public perception of the Department.
- F. Do not make any statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage or otherwise express bias against any race, religion or any protected class as defined by federal, state or local law.
- G. Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department without authorization.
- H. Make clear that you are expressing your personal opinion and not that of the Cincinnati Department.
- I. Do not share confidential or proprietary information.
- J. Do not violate Cincinnati Fire Department policies and or procedures.
- K. Do not release information to the public that has not been authorized by the Fire PIO or Fire Chief.

506.09 Disciplinary Actions

Inappropriate use of the internet, cell phone or any other form of instant technology regarding Cincinnati Fire Department business may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination as a member/employee/contractor/or volunteer of the Cincinnati Fire Department.

Violations of this policy will result in charges being filed. A disciplinary hearing will be conducted and if found in violation of this policy, progressive discipline will result.