


FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL POLICY MANUAL

	SUBJECT SOCIAL MEDIA	POLICY NUMBER 15.02
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15.02.01 PURPOSE

The Florida Highway Patrol endorses the controlled use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. The purpose of this policy is to establish the Division’s position on the utility and management of social media and to provide guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

15.02.02 POLICY

Social media provides a potentially valuable means of assisting the Division and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, recruitment efforts, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be expanded upon as deemed reasonable by supervisory personnel. The Division also recognizes the role that social media plays in the personal lives of some employees. The personal use of social media can have bearing on Division personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature, as well as prohibitions on the use of social media, applicable to all Division employees.

15.02.03 DEFINITIONS

- A. **BLOG** – A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for “Web log.”
- B. **CONTENT** – Information that is to be expressed through some medium. Examples include, but are not limited to, audio, graphics, photographs, sketches, text, and video.
- C. **POST** – Content an individual disseminates, publishes, or shares on social media.
- D. **PROFILE** – Information that a user provides about an individual (personally or of another), a group, an entity, or an organization on social media or a social network. Examples of such information include, but are not limited to, age, race, sex, employment, education, religion, political views, location, and contact information.

- E. **SOCIAL MEDIA** – Information sharing technologies, including devices, which provide users with the ability to communicate, collaborate, and/or share content with others. Social media may include social networks, micro-blogging websites, personal websites, networking websites, forums, podcasts, wikis, blogs, photo or video sharing websites, or information sharing within a defined network. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Giphy, Tumblr, Reddit, YouTube, and Wikipedia.
- F. **SOCIAL NETWORKS** – Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and/or socialize with others using a range of technologies.

15.02.04 PROCEDURES

A. DIVISION MANAGED SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONTENT

1. Division managed social media accounts shall only be created and managed with express authorization from the Division Director.
 - a. The Chief of Public Affairs, or authorized designee, will create all social media accounts.
 - b. The Chief of Public Affairs, and specifically designated personnel, will manage all official social media accounts on behalf of the Division.
 - c. A list of individuals authorized to post on Division managed social media, on behalf of the Division, shall be maintained by the Public Affairs Office.
2. On-duty employees are permitted to use Division resources and Division devices to access social media for work related activities, subject to the limitations in this policy and applicable Department policy.
3. Employees are prohibited from creating any social media account that represents the Division as an organization, unless specifically authorized in advance by the Division Director, or designee, in coordination with the Chief of Public Affairs.
4. As social media technologies afford the Division with broader means to communicate and share information with the public, Division employees are encouraged to convey ideas, strategies, and technologies, through their chain of command, to the Public Affairs Office. These will then be evaluated for implementation in a coordinated manner to avoid fragmentation and misinformation.
5. The Public Affairs Office shall establish protocols to ensure social media accounts and content adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology, public affairs, and records management policies.

6. The Division's official accounts shall display or direct users to a public notice that indicates the content posted or submitted is subject to public disclosure and shall stipulate the type of comments or content that will be deleted. If there is insufficient space on the social media platform, users should be directed via a link to said information on a Division website.
7. Employees should be mindful that photographs or video may be captured by the Division during its activities, and that this content may be posted to Division social media accounts, which are available to the public. All employees should also be mindful that once content is posted to social media it frequently is disseminated by others beyond the Division's control.
 - a. The Public Affairs Office shall not identify Division employees by name or other personal identifier when appearing in content posted to Division social media accounts without first obtaining the employee's documented consent.
 - b. Consent must be freely and voluntarily given, with an option to decline. When consent is required, but cannot be obtained, content may only be used when identifying features (e.g., face, nametag) are not visible, have been blurred, or are similarly obscured.
8. This policy does not restrict the creation and use of social media accounts for official administrative or criminal investigative purposes at the direction of the Division Director, or designee, wherein the Division's name or representative logos are not utilized.

B. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Employees are prohibited from using Division resources to access social media for non-work related activities pursuant to DHSMV Policy 8.03, Personal Computer Use and Internet Access.

Any on-duty use of personal devices to access appropriate websites for work related purposes as defined in DHSMV Policy 8.03, shall be kept solely for work related purposes.

2. Employees are free to express themselves as private citizens using personal social media sites and personal devices. Employees may express themselves as private citizens regarding issues of public concern, including issues involving or impacting the Division. The prohibitions identified in FHP Policy 3.03, Code of Conduct, are applicable to personal and professional internet and social media posts.

Specifically, members are reminded of the provisions of FHP Policy 3.03.6(25), which states, "Members will not publicly criticize or ridicule the Department or Division, its policies or other employees by speech, writing or other expression, where such speech, writing or other expression is defamatory, obscene, unlawful, undermines the effectiveness of the Department or Division, interferes with the maintenance of discipline or is made with reckless disregard for truth." Nothing herein shall be

construed to limit an employee's rights under Section 447.301(3), Florida Statutes, to engage in concerted activities.

3. Employees who express themselves as private citizens regarding purely personal subjects and violate Division or Department policy, may be subject to disciplinary action. Examples of prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, posting obscene material, defamatory statements, harassment, or acts, statements, or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or other protected class; or discredit the integrity of the Division or its employees, or impair the operations of the Department or Division.
4. Employees must be mindful that as members of a public organization, speech made pursuant to their official duties is not protected under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if found to be in violation of Division or Department policy.
5. Employees, whether on-duty or off-duty, in using social media are prohibited from:
 - a. Making any statement, content, or post that implies or states they are acting on behalf of the Division or Department without express authorization of the Division Director, or designee.
 - b. Making any statement regarding guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee;
 - c. Making any statement regarding the character or reputation of any suspect, arrestee, complainant or citizen dealing with the Department;
 - d. Making any comment, statement, or post regarding agency related investigations, prosecutions, judicial proceedings, or assignments in which the Division is involved unless authorized for release through the Public Affairs Office;
 - e. Disclosing content from a crime scene or persons involved in an official Division incident by means of uploading, sharing, or otherwise transmitting the content from any personal or agency device unless authorized for release through the Public Affairs Office;
 - f. Disclosing the content of any criminal intelligence information, active criminal investigative information, information concerning confidential informants, sensitive information, or information received from third parties with a request that the information be held in confidence.
6. Employees should also be aware that inappropriate and even questionable content or behavior posted to social media may be used to impeach one's credibility in a court of law.

7. Employees are encouraged to review permissions or security settings to ensure their social media accounts are not fully available for viewing by the general public, and are only available to those that they authorize. Even when properly set, security settings on social media sites are fluid and employees should consider that posts could receive broad dissemination at any time.
8. For safety and security reasons, employees should exercise discretion when disclosing their employment with the Division on social media.
9. Employees who choose to identify themselves on social media as an employee of the Florida Highway Patrol, whether explicitly, implicitly, or visually, shall:
 - a. Be considered to be publicly representing the Department from the period forward until no longer employed by the Department;
 - b. Do so in a manner that accurately and professionally depicts their employment and law enforcement;
 - c. Not make statements of political support for or against candidates, platforms or laws where it is either expressed or implied that the statement of political support for or against is being made on behalf of the Department or represents the official position of the Department; if such statements or support is made, members must clearly identify it is a personal opinion, not the opinion of the Department;
 - d. Be responsible for all content published on their individual social media site(s); and
 - e. Immediately report to their supervisor when they become aware their social media sites have been hacked or that inappropriate content has been published on their sites without their permission.
10. Employees shall not publish unauthorized or distorted Department images or content using social media without prior approval from the Division Director or designee.
11. Employees shall not publish content that includes photos of sworn personnel in uniform; marked agency vehicles; videos of training or operations; compilation videos of personnel, vehicles, or equipment; electronic artwork of the FHP patch or seal; or other identifying content; without prior approval from the Division Director or designee.

NOTE: Unaltered photos of Official Department or Division events are exempt from this restriction, i.e. awards banquets, graduation or promotional ceremonies.

Members may repost unedited images from Department social media sites.

12. For officer safety and security reasons, employees while on duty or off duty shall not make any statement, content, or post, while in or outside an agency vehicle or with an agency vehicle visible, or while on agency premises or with an agency facility visible without express authorization of the Division Director, or designee.
13. Employees shall not create an identity, website, page, fan group or other application of social media using the Florida Highway Patrol, or any association thereto, as the basis of such a creation without prior approval from the Division Director or designee, e.g., creating a website or fan group dedicated to the Florida Highway Patrol, using "Florida Highway Patrol" or "FHP" in a username.
14. Employees assigned to or considering assignment to any sensitive position that may require undercover credentials are prohibited from using social media to:
 - a. Post Division logos, uniforms, vehicles, equipment, or similar identifying items;
 - b. Post personal photographs, video, or other means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as a sworn law enforcement officer.
15. Employees should be cautious about revealing information on social media that could identify their home addresses, personal phone numbers, personal email addresses, or other personal identifying information, such as dates of birth, account information, etc. Employees should also be aware of geotagging technologies, which add a person's historic or real-time location, such as GPS coordinates, to different type of multimedia or social media applications.