

**MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP
POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER**



VOLUME: 2

CHAPTER: 20

OF PAGES: 3

SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC SOCIAL NETWORKING

EFFECTIVE DATE:

August 10, 2012

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS:

N/A

BY THE ORDER OF:

Chief Robert Oches

SUPERSEDES ORDER #:

PURPOSE The purpose of this general order is to provide guidance to the employees of the Middletown Township Police Department concerning their personal web pages, websites, and other electronic social networking sites.

POLICY While employees have a right to maintain personal web pages and websites, their status as members of the Middletown Township Police Department requires that the content of those web pages and websites are not in violation of existing agency rules, regulations, policy, procedures, directives or create a potential conflict of interest. The Chief of Police reserves the right to restrict an employee's involvement in electronic social networking sites for the good of the agency.

PROCEDURES

I. General

- A. Personal web pages or websites include, but are not limited to Facebook®, MySpace®, YouTube®, Twitter®, LinkedIn®, and other social/professional networking or dating sites, etc.
- B. Internet posting also includes accounts of agency activity or investigations (criminal, civil or administrative) on Twitter® or similar electronic networking site.
- C. Employees have the potential to be called as a witness in court proceedings related to their employment as a member of this agency. Credibility and character are subject to challenge and potential impeachment based upon the nature of postings on personal web pages, websites and other electronic social networking sites from any time, past or present and the person(s) or organization(s) with whom the employee networks.
- D. Employees shall be cognizant of the potential adverse consequences of Internet postings and networking such as their credibility during cross-examination in court, future employment, current and future assignments, and possible embarrassment in the media.
- E. Employees must be aware that networking with Judges, attorneys, court personnel, or other members of the Judiciary or defense attorneys may result in adverse consequences to the operation of the police department or the Prosecutor's Office when prosecuting or attempting to prosecute criminal and civil matters. Examples of such consequences include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Having to change prosecution venues if a conflict of interest is alleged;
 - 2. Rendering testimony of investigative personnel inadmissible or impeachable due to alleged conflicts of interest due to electronic personal relationships;
 - 3. An increase in successful appeals due to perceived conflicts of interest.
- F. Conduct both on and off duty is subject to the rules and regulations of this agency. Any electronic social networking activity that brings discredit to the Middletown Township Police Department and/or of an employee's status as an employee of this agency is prohibited.
- G. Employees shall not express personal opinion as official agency policy or position.
- H. Any item, object, material, or account that could be used or misconstrued as official agency sanctioned property or position shall not be used or depicted on any personal Internet posting without the expressed written permission of the Chief of Police. These items, objects, or materials include, but are not limited to: photographs, images, reproductions or other depictions or accounts of agency uniforms, badges, emblems, equipment, weapons, marked or unmarked units, specialty vehicles, buildings, reports, evidence, crime or crash scenes, dead or injured animals, etc.

- I. Employees shall not display or post any image or comment involving a reference concerning any form of bias, hatred, or derogatory comments about any protected class of persons.
- J. Except while in the course of official law enforcement business (e.g., intelligence gathering, criminal investigation, homeland security, etc.), employees shall not assume the identity of another or an identity that could be assumed to be factual (e.g., alias, penname, etc.) while posting any comments.

II. Approval Process

- A. Any employee seeking approval to use any item, object, or material described above on a personal webpage or site shall submit a written request through the chain of command to the Chief of Police.
 - 1. Describe the proposed reference to the agency and purpose.
 - 2. Provide a list of media to be used on the web page.
 - 3. Provide a printed layout of the material that is the subject of the request.
- B. The Chief of Police will approve or deny the request based upon the merits of the request and its compliance with existing agency policy, orders, or directives.