

## SCRANTON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

*Effective Date:*  
**August 12, 2019**

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**10-001**

*Policy Subject:*  
**Social Media**

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**4**

*PLEAC Standard(s):*

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and responsibilities of department members while using social media outlets. Social media outlets, when used in a proper manner, can reinforce the Department's relationship with the public, build community support, and assist in solving crime. The Scranton Police Department strives to preserve and protect the integrity of its officers while maintaining the faith and trust of its citizens.

This policy is not intended to address any particular form of social media, but rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new forms of social media will emerge.

### **II. POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Scranton Police Department to ensure Department operations, confidentiality and functions are not adversely impacted by the indiscreet use of social media, both by the Departmental and personal use of social media outlets.

Department members have a constitutional right to express their views under the First Amendment. However, Department members may be subject to discipline for violating the provisions of this policy. Any social media participation made pursuant to a Department member's official duties is not considered protected speech under the First Amendment. Employees are advised and cautioned that the inappropriate or unauthorized use of social media may have a negative impact on their career, professional well-being and credibility in court.

### **III. PROCEDURES**

A. Official departmental use

1. Department social media outlets
  - a. All Department social media outlets shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
  - b. Social media content shall be in accordance with all Department policies and directives to include, but not limited to, 07-007 Standards of Conduct, 07-010 Police-Media Relations, and 16-016 Public Access to Police Reports.
  - c. Department social media outlets shall only be administered and maintained by authorized personnel. Authorized personnel shall:
    - 1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Department while administering Department social media outlets.
    - 2) Not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information regarding Department training, activities, or on-going investigations without permission from the Chief of Police and/or his/her designee.
    - 3) Not make statements indicating the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions.
    - 4) Not use personally owned devices to manage Department's social media activity without prior approval.
  
2. Investigative use
  - a. The Scranton Police Department recognizes the value of social media with regard to investigative lead development, suspect identification, covert operations and case development.
  - b. An officer desiring to pursue investigative information through the interactive use of social media (as opposed to merely browsing or researching) shall:
    - 1) Notify his/her direct supervisor of the intended use and benefits before the use of the social media.
    - 2) Use only department owned equipment throughout the investigation.
  - c. The use and/or creation of alias accounts or identities used to participate in any discussion or contact with a suspect shall be authorized by the Detective Lieutenant. Legal concerns will be addressed with the appropriate prosecutor's office prior to authorization.
  
- B. Personal use
  1. Department members are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not negatively impact working relationships in the Department, impede or negatively impact the performance of duties, including the essential job function of maintaining credibility with the courts, or negatively affect the public perception of the Department.
  
  2. When using social media, Department members should be mindful that their communications become part of the worldwide electronic public domain. Department members should be aware that privacy settings and

social media sites are subject to constant modifications, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected or secure.

3. Department members should expect that any information created, downloaded, transmitted, exchanged, posted, or discussed in any public online forum may be accessed by the Department at any time without prior notification. Department members should be aware that information, views, statements, or opinions posted on social media may be uncovered by others without his/her knowledge. This information then may be used, even out of context, to impeach the member's character or credibility. Members are cautioned not to post information on social media that they do not want to answer to on the witness stand or in employment actions.
4. Department members should exercise caution regarding the safety and security of self, family, and friends. Information posted could be accessed by individuals and groups that are intent on harming law enforcement officers and their families.
5. Department members are prohibited from:
  - a. Posting, displaying, or transmitting:
    - 1) Any communications that discredit or reflect poorly on the Department, its missions or goals.
    - 2) Content that is disparaging to a person or group based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected class.
    - 3) Any information, records, documents, video recordings, audio recordings, or photographs to which they have access as a result of their employment without the written permission from the Chief of Police and/or his/her designee.
    - 4) Any references to any other Department member's employment by the Department without that person's consent.
    - 5) Any intellectual or real property of the Department or the City of Scranton without the specific authorization of the Chief of Police or his/her designee. This includes but is not limited to issued equipment, official photographs, audio/video files, or any text documents (paper or electronic).
    - 6) Any information representing themselves as an official spokesperson of the Department or the City of Scranton unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
  - b. Using Department devices to access social media outlets except in the performance of an authorized duty.
  - c. Posting or transmitting any communications while on duty, unless authorized and in the performance of an officer's duties.
  - d. Exceptions:
    - 1) Department approved social media.
      - a) Department members are permitted to take video and/or photos of themselves and/or other members of the Scranton Police

Department and submit the media to authorized personnel for use on Department approved social media sites.

- b) The authorized personnel approved by Chief of Police or his/her designee will be responsible for ensuring the media is in compliance with Department policy prior to posting on Department social media.

By Order Of:

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Chief Carl R. Graziano  
Superintendent of Police  
Scranton Police Department