



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Social Media – Off-Duty Use

Eff. Date 03/06/2019

Purpose

The Madison Police Department (MPD) endorses the use of web-based and mobile-based technologies designed to facilitate internet communications, known as “social media,” in a responsible, professional, ethical and legal manner. This procedure establishes a standard of conduct for all MPD personnel related to their employment while using all forms of social media, whether utilizing currently established or forthcoming technologies. This procedure applies to all MPD employees and personnel.

Procedure

This procedure serves to clarify and establish guidelines and prohibitions for MPD personnel’s personal use of social media, and seeks to mitigate negative consequences of the personal use of such technology that may have bearing on MPD personnel in their official capacities. These guidelines and prohibitions build on policy requirements put forth in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, Madison Police Department Mission Statement and Core Values, as well as all applicable portions of Madison Police Department Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures, City of Madison Administrative Procedure Memoranda, and established City, State, and Federal Law.

MPD personnel have a duty to represent honestly, respectfully, and legally their dedication to the profession of law enforcement while on- and off-duty. MPD personnel are expected to represent the Core Values of the Madison Police Department at all times, even while using the internet for personal purposes. All MPD personnel are reminded that they are committed to act as representatives of the MPD at all times, while on and off duty, and that all policies, memos, and applicable laws governing conduct also apply to conduct associated with the use of social media.

Due to the nature of the work and policies of the MPD, these standards should be expected to be more proscriptive than those put forth in City of Madison APM 3-16. Employees will not post, transmit, share, publish or otherwise disseminate any of the following:

1. Any information gained by reason of their employment with the Madison Police Department (without permission from the Chief or designee). This includes classified or sensitive information and/or contents of police records. (See MPD Code of Conduct #21 and SOP Records Inspection and Release and City of Madison General Ordinance 3.35(5)(d).)
2. Information that would impede performance of duties, impair discipline or negatively impact the public perception of the MPD.
3. Any images of MPD logos, uniform, or property in a manner that may negatively affect or cause reputational harm to the public’s perception of the MPD. MPD personnel are permitted to use photographs or video recordings taken during MPD-sanctioned, official ceremonies and events, such as graduation, promotional ceremonies, Honor Guard ceremonies, etc.
4. Any material that may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an employee’s testimony.
5. Any material that endorses or promotes products, opinions or causes and that could reasonably be considered to represent the view or position of the MPD (without permission from the Chief or designee).

Other departmental policies, procedures and directives may apply to the off-duty use of social media. The MPD will not be actively monitoring personal social media accounts of its employees. Monitoring of a personal site will only take place if a concern/complaint is brought to the attention of the MPD.

Original SOP: 02/25/2015
(Revised: 03/06/2019)
(Reviewed Only: 11/01/2016, 12/26/2017, 01/31/2020, 02/04/2022, 02/05/2024)