

Social Media Policy

The City of Columbus recognizes that employees may choose to use and participate in social media with family, friends and coworkers. However, employees of the City of Columbus should recognize that the use of personal social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities, even when using personal computers during employee's private time. To assist you in making responsible decisions about employee use of social media, the City of Columbus has established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media.

This policy applies to all employees who work for the City of Columbus, including any of its departments in the City of Columbus.

Guidelines

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, *social media* can mean many things. *Social media* includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the Internet, including to your own or someone else's web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affiliated website, web bulletin board or chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the City of Columbus, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

The same principles and guidelines found in the employee handbook apply to your activities online. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for what you post online. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow employees or otherwise adversely affects members of the department, citizens of Columbus, companies doing business with the City of Columbus, or other third parties, including people who work for or on behalf of the City of Columbus may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Know and Follow the Rules

As an employee of the City of Columbus, you are instructed to carefully read these guidelines and consider all the provisions of the employee handbook, including, but not limited to, the City's policy against discrimination and harassment and you should ensure that your postings are consistent with these

policies. Inappropriate postings may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Be Respectful

Employees of the City of Columbus should always be fair and courteous to fellow employees, citizens engaged in activities with the City of Columbus, members of the public with whom the City comes into contact, companies or people contracting with the City of Columbus to perform work on behalf of the City of Columbus. You should keep in mind that you are more likely to resolve work related complaints by speaking directly with co-workers or by utilizing the City's open door policy than by posting complaints to a social media outlet. If you decide to post complaints or criticism, you should avoid using statements, photographs, video or audio that reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, that disparage customers, co-employees, suppliers or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other status protected by law or municipal policy.

Be Honest and Accurate

When posting content on the internet, you should always strive to be honest and accurate. If you make a mistake, you should correct it quickly. You should never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about the City of Columbus, fellow employees, members of the public, or other companies doing business within the City of Columbus including people working on behalf of the City or any other person or company.

Post Only Appropriate and Respectful Content

Employees should maintain confidentiality with regard to City of Columbus confidential information. Internal reports, policies, procedures or other City of Columbus related confidential communication should not be posted on social media sites.

Employees should not create a link from any employee blog site, website or other social networking site to a City of Columbus website without the express permission of the Mayor and City Council.

You should never represent yourself on a social media site as a spokesperson for the City of Columbus. If the City of Columbus is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of the City of Columbus, fellow employees of the City of Columbus, members of the public, citizens or companies doing business with or of the vicinity of the City of Columbus. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do or relating to persons or matters associated with the City of Columbus, you should make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the City of Columbus. If you do post a matter on a social media website, keep in mind that, as stated above, malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating remarks or remarks that might constitute harassment, bullying or the creation of a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion or any other protective status may subject you to discipline, up to and including termination.

Using Social Media at Work

You should refrain from using social media while on work time, during working hours, or on equipment provided by the City of Columbus for official City business, unless it is work-related as authorized by your department head and consistent with the other policies and procedures set forth in the employee handbook for the City of Columbus. You should never use employer email addresses to register you on social network sites, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.

Retaliation is Prohibited

The City of Columbus prohibits taking negative action against any employee of the City for reporting what he or she thinks is a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation into the possible violation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible violation of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Media Contacts

Employees of the City of Columbus should not speak to members of the media on behalf of the employer without first contacting the human resources department of the City of Columbus and the chief operating officer of the City of Columbus. Media inquiries should be directed to them.

Supplemental Policies and Procedures, SOP Provisions

Certain departments of the City, particularly those involved in emergency response, should be aware that their conduct on social medias sites can be particularly damaging to the City of Columbus due to their exposure to sensitive information, matters relating to criminal investigations, health related information, the disclosure of which may drastically damage the City's ability to prosecute crime, or otherwise operate efficiently in the case of an emergency. As such, emergency response employees are cautioned that speech, whether on duty or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities, may not be protected speech under the first amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed to be detrimental to the department or not a matter of public concern. All employees of the City, and in particular emergency response employees of the City should be aware that their private speech on social media sites will reflect upon their office and their individual departments and should be constantly mindful of their employment when posting on social media sites.

Display of Logos, Uniforms or Identifying Items on Social Media Sites

Employees should not post department logos, department uniforms, badges or other official items on personal web pages which tend to identify such employees as members or employees of a department of the City of Columbus or of an employee of the City of Columbus itself which may cause them to be confused with a person speaking as a spokesperson for the department.

Employees using social media should keep in mind that their speech on social media sites becomes part of the world wide electronic domain.

Employees of the City of Columbus should be aware that privacy settings on social media sites are frequently changed by the administrators of social media sites. Therefore, City employees should always assume that content posted on such sites is being published to the world.

Reporting Violations

Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of another employee of the City of Columbus posting content on any website or webpage, blog site or other form of electronic media in violation of the provisions of this policy, including those of the provisions of the employee handbook, have a responsibility to immediately notify his or her supervisor and to cooperate in any follow up investigation which may occur as a result. Failure to report a suspected violation is itself a violation of this policy.