



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Social Media Non-Investigative Use

Eff. Date 01/30/2019

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,” to enhance communication with the public, to disseminate information in an accessible and timely manner, and to solicit collaboration with the community. This procedure establishes a standard of conduct and content for all items posted to any social media site or application by any personnel authorized and trained to represent the MPD to the public through these channels of communication.

Application

This procedure applies to all MPD employees and personnel using or posting to social media as an authorized representative of the MPD. This does not apply to approved use of social media for investigative purposes (see MPD SOP, Social Media – Investigative Use).

Procedure

This procedure serves to clarify and establish guidelines and prohibitions for MPD-authorized use of social media. These guidelines and prohibitions build on policy requirements put forth in the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, MPD Mission Statement and Core Values, as well as all applicable portions of MPD Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures, City of Madison Administrative Procedure Memoranda, and established city, state, and federal law.

As representatives of the MPD in all public settings, personnel have a responsibility to communicate accurate and timely information to the public in a professional manner. Authorized personnel posting to social media sites on behalf of the MPD are expected to adhere to all standards of conduct and to present information in a respectful, professional, and ethical manner. Authorized personnel are approved by the Assistant Chief of Support and Community Outreach.

Appropriate use of MPD-sanctioned social media sites may include, but is not limited to, community outreach and engagement, recruitment, release of time-sensitive and emergency information, soliciting information regarding an investigation or activities, and promoting safety and informing the public about crime prevention tips and tactics.

All pages and accounts maintained on behalf of the MPD will contain a statement indicating the official nature of the account, as well as, general contact information for the MPD; where possible, a disclaimer will be posted on these pages, as well, stating that opinions expressed by visitors to the page do not reflect the opinions of the MPD, and a statement of notification regarding comment moderation and open records requirements.

Where possible and appropriate, digital postings should link directly to information available through the City of Madison website, most commonly the MPD section of the website. Linking to sources outside of the official internet presence maintained by the City of Madison and its various departments and offices is strictly prohibited without the express permission of the Assistant Chief of Support and Community Outreach, or the designee of that individual.

Records of all posts to social media sites will be retained per open records regulations as established by the City of Madison. These records will be maintained by City of Madison Information Technology. All content posted to these sites on behalf of the MPD, as well as in interaction with the MPD, will be stored in a manner such that they are accessible for open records requests.

Use of personally-owned devices, such as home computers and mobile computing devices, is allowed as long as access to the software is accomplished through the use of a City IT developed web browser application.

MPD personnel shall abide by all Terms of Service as stipulated by the site or software; this includes, but is not limited to, a prohibition of falsely identifying oneself on a site or sites, infringing on copyrighted material, and violating the privacy or rights of other users.

MPD personnel are prohibited from sharing, transmitting, or posting classified or sensitive information, or the contents of police records, or any matters relating to official police business, or knowledge gained during the course of their professional duties. (See MPD Code of Conduct # 21, SOP Records Inspection and Release and City of Madison General Ordinance 3.35(5)(d).)

MPD-approved representatives are prohibited from using their affiliation with the MPD or the City of Madison as grounds to endorse or promote products, opinions, or causes; the MPD should not be made to appear to condone or support any public, private, or personal enterprise through digital posts made to any social media site. This does not preclude, however, instances where social media is used in collaboration with partners to cross promote events and to acknowledge the good works of these relationships.

On-Duty Photography and Videos

Photos and videos may be taken with personal cell phones and cameras while on duty for MPD social media purposes. The use of personal cell phones and cameras to take photos and videos on behalf of MPD is done at the discretion of the owner. MPD is not responsible for loss or damage incurred as a result of device use while on duty.

All photos and videos intended for MPD social media should be sent to a member of the MPD Social Media Team (socialmediaMPD@cityofmadison.com) along with a brief description/caption that can accompany the photo(s) and video(s) when they are posted.

Authorized personnel will review the photos and videos for compliance with City APMs and Department policy before they are published on MPD's social media accounts.

Photographs and Videos of Youth

Photos and videos of children will require permission from a parent or guardian. When submitting the photo or video to the MPD Social Media Team, include a note in the message confirming:

1. Name and relationship to the child of the person giving permission
2. The location, date, and time permission was granted

Best practice is to take photos and videos that do not clearly depict juvenile's faces. If a juvenile has written permission on record with another agency/business/school/program, then include a note indicating such when submitting the photo or video.

Original SOP: 02/25/2015

(Revised: 02/05/2016, 01/20/2017, 06/19/2017, 11/02/2017, 11/09/2017, 01/30/2019)

(Reviewed Only: 11/01/2016, 02/04/2022, 02/05/2024, 01/31/2026)