

BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order
No. 140

Effective Date
12-08-2011

Revised Date
NA-NA-NANA

Subject: **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Reviewed 9/1/16

POLICY

The Baton Rouge Police Department recognizes the growing importance of online social media networks as a communication tool. This policy addresses employees' use of such networks including: personal websites, web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other kind of social media. The Baton Rouge Police Department respects the right of employees to use these mediums during their personal time. Use of these mediums during Department time or on Department equipment, however, is prohibited unless sanctioned by the Department.

The Baton Rouge Police Department acknowledges that it is no violation of department policy for employees to participate in the use of social media networks. In general, employees who participate in social media are free to publish personal information without censorship by the Baton Rouge Police Department. Employees must avoid, however, posting information that could harm the Baton Rouge Police Department using the guidelines set forth below.

All employees are responsible for maintaining the Department's positive reputation and under no circumstances should employees present the Department to the public in a manner that diminishes its standing within the community. Instead, employees are responsible for presenting the Department in a manner that safeguards the positive reputation of themselves, as well as the Department and its employees. Employees are cautioned that commenting, and or posting of images, and files, in any manner reflecting adversely against the reputation of the Baton Rouge Police Department may be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

PURPOSE

To establish the Department's position on the utility, management, administration, and over-site of social media, as it effects and applies to employees of the Baton Rouge Police Department.

- Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. Term is short for "web Log."
- Disclaimers:** *A statement, document, or assertion that disclaims responsibility or affiliation.*
- Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- Post:** *Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on site.*
- Profile:** *Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.*
- Social Media:** *A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation.*

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Social Networks: *A category of internet-based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, (facebook, myspace), microblogging sites (twitter, nixle), photo and video sharing sites (flickr, youtube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (dig, reddit).*

Free Speech: Public employees and department personnel are cautioned that speech, on or off duty, made pursuant to their official duties, is not protected under the First Amendment and may form the basis for disciplinary action if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume their speech and related activity on social media sites reflect upon their office and this department. Personnel retain the right to speak freely on matters of public concern, as long as they are speaking as a citizen and not in their "official" capacity.

I. Prohibited Acts

- A. The following acts are prohibited and may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.
1. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or any other class of individuals.
 2. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
 3. Speech that would bring the department into disrepute or which impairs the mission of the department and/or the ability of department personnel to perform their duties.
 4. Divulging information gained by reason of their authority and/or employment; making any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publishing materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without express authorization.
 5. Use of department computers by to access social media without authorization
 6. Use of personally owned devices to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties without express written permission.
 7. Using or authorizing any other party to use any photographs or other depictions of department uniforms, badges, patches, marked patrol cars, or any other item or material which is identifiable to the Baton Rouge Police Department without written permission from the Chief of Police or his designee.

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8. Postings of any criminal justice information to social network sites are explicitly prohibited.
 - a. Confidential, sensitive, or copyrighted information.
 - b. Data from criminal or administrative investigations including photographs, videos, or audio recordings.
 - c. Photographs of suspects, arrestees or evidence.
 - d. Personal statements about any investigation that is not included in an official police report.

II. Department Sanctioned Presence

- A. Department sanctioned media pages shall adhere to the following guidelines:
 1. All Department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee and shall be administered by the department's Computer Operations and/or Information Services Department.
 2. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology, records management policies, and the Baton Rouge City Parish Internet Use Policy.
 3. Content shall be subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 4. Content must be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with open record laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
 5. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website.
 6. Social media pages shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Department.
 7. Page(s) shall indicate any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
 8. Page(s) shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
 9. The page(s) shall indicate that is for Department sanctioned use.
- B. Department personnel representing the Department by social network outlet shall:
 1. Identify themselves as a member of the Baton Rouge Police Department.
 2. Conduct themselves as representatives of the Department, and shall adhere to all Department standards of conduct.

III. Employees Identifying Themselves On The Internet As BRPD Members

- A. Employees of the Baton Rouge Police Department should carefully consider whether or not to identify themselves as such while posting to social media networks. Employees are required to state in clear terms that the views expressed on any social media network are the employee's alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Baton Rouge Police Department.

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1. Employees should know that any information posted may remain accessible to the public for an indefinite amount of time.
2. Employees should be aware that information posted may impact potential citizen contacts, court-room credibility, and the ability to seek and obtain an undercover assignment within the Department.
3. Employees shall not post images of persons, on or off duty, who work in an undercover capacity, or identify them as co-workers, police officers, etc.
4. Employees shall not use abusive or inappropriate text to attack colleagues, Department and City Policies, or elected/appointed municipal officials.
5. Employees shall not post derogatory or offensive comments related to their official duties.

IV. Employees Not Identifying Themselves on the Internet as Members of the Baton Rouge Police Department

- A. Employees who elect not to identify themselves as members of the Baton Rouge Police Department are reminded that they are still subject to the General Orders at all times. Employees are reminded that actions taken while online in violation of the General Orders, even when off-duty, will be subject to appropriate review and disciplinary action.
- B. Anything posted on an employee's web site or web log or other internet content for which the employee is responsible will be subject to all Baton Rouge Police Department policies, rules, regulations and guidelines. The Baton Rouge Police Department is free to view and monitor an employee's website or web log at any time without consent or previous approval.
- C. An employee who is responsible for a social media posting that fails to comply with the guidelines set forth in this policy or that otherwise causes harm to the Baton Rouge Police Department may be subject to disciplinary action. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential Department information, information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or the content of anything posted on any social media.