


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Department Social Media Management		AOM: S-106.a
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced:		Issuing Authority <hr/> John Cartledge Chief of Police
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Table of Contents

I.	I. Introductory Discussion	1
II.	II. Definitions	2
III.	III. Purpose	2
IV.	IV Department Authorized Use of Social Networks	3
V.	V Objectives of Department Social Media Accounts	4
VI.	VI Facebook	5
VII.	VII.X (Formerly Twitter)	6
VIII.	VIII.Website	6

I. Introductory Discussion

Members of the Northampton Police Department strive to create and maintain open lines of communication with members of the public. Social media provides a valuable means of assisting police agencies in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, and crime prevention objectives. Social media can be used to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange.

It is the policy of this agency that social media be used in a thoughtful, targeted manner, to further the agency's community outreach and crime prevention goals.

II. Definitions

- A. **Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.
- B. **Comment:** Response to a blog post, news article, social media entry, or other social networking post.
- C. **Forum:** Discussion area on websites where people can post messages or comment on existing messages at any time.
- D. **Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- E. **Post (noun):** Content that an individual shares on a social media or similar site.
- F. **Post (verb):** The act of creating, uploading, editing, or adding to any social media outlet. This includes text, images, audio, video, or any other multimedia file.
- G. **Profile:** Information that a user provides about themselves of an organization on a social networking or similar site.
- H. **Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites, blogs and microblogging sites, image and video sharing sites, wikis, and news sites that permit user contributed content.
- I. **Social Networks:** Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- J. **Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

III. Purpose

Social networking has become an intricate part of everyday communication. This policy is intended to provide guidelines for all employees of the Northampton Police Department who

have been selected to oversee and manage those networks and to preserve and protect the professional interest of the department.

IV. Department Authorized Use of Social Networks

- A. The Chief of Police or their designee may authorize the use of social networks or social media sites to any element or employee for the purpose of promoting the Northampton Police Department's mission and goals.

- B. All Department authorized social media sites, whenever practicable:
 - 1. Shall include a disclaimer that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department and that the department reserves the right to remove postings which violate federal, state, city or departmental rules, regulations, or ordinances. The department may also remove any material that is deemed offensive or inappropriate (e.g. obscenities, commercial postings, and political statements or endorsements).
 - 2. Shall be approved by the Chief of Police, or their designee, and shall be administered by the Department's designated social media personnel.
 - 3. Shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Department and shall have Department contact information prominently displayed.
 - 4. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - 5. Social media content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules can apply to social media content.
 - 6. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Department.
 - 7. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Department reserves the right to moderate those comments which violate the Department's Terms of Use Policy.
 - 8. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

- C. Employees shall adhere to the following guidelines when using Department social media accounts:
 - 1. Employees authorized to use social media on behalf of the department shall conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Northampton Police Department, and accordingly, shall adhere to all Department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - 2. Employees should be aware that their speech becomes published record on the World Wide Web.

3. Information posted on department authorized accounts must be respectful and professional. Corrections should be issued when needed.
 4. Employees authorized to use social media shall familiarize themselves with *AOM A106 Public Information Function* to understand what information may be released.
 5. Employees shall not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including images or videos, related to Department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
 6. Employees shall not conduct political activities or private business.
 7. The use of Department computers by Department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization. Only designated members of the Department's Social Media Team may access Department social media accounts.
 8. Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the Department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission.
 9. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
- D. When taking part in social media, employees must limit the use of department equipment, regardless of device type, to official department business.
- E. The Chief of Police may create a Social Media Team, comprised of specially selected officers who are tasked with managing all Departmental social media accounts. Only members of NPD who have been selected by the Chief of Police or their designee shall access or modify any of the Department's social media accounts. All sites shall be password protected and passwords shall be limited to those personnel who have been selected to maintain the accounts. At no time shall anyone with the password disseminate it to non-designated individuals.

V. Objectives of Department Social Media Accounts

Social media accounts can serve an agency in a variety of different ways.

- A. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
1. Missing persons.
 2. Wanted persons.
 3. Crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking).
 4. Images or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.

5. Soliciting tips about past crimes.
- B. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
1. Providing crime prevention tips.
 2. Sharing information about community outreach activities.
 3. Notifying the community of upcoming Department events.
 4. Highlighting the good work of Department personnel.
 5. Notifying the community about crimes and activities.
 6. Sharing crime maps and data.
- C. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:
1. Road closures.
 2. Special events
 3. Weather emergencies.
 4. Missing or endangered persons.
 5. Lost/found pets.
- D. Social media is a critical element of recruiting sworn and civilian staff. Many interested candidates will visit an agency's website or social media accounts. The Department's Social media should accounts should:
1. Include information about the hiring process.
 2. Maintain an online employment application.
 3. Highlight areas of specialization within the Agency.
 4. Include information on the Department's varied activities in the community.

VI. Facebook

The goal of the Northampton Police Department Facebook page is to:

- A. Promote a positive public image of the Northampton Police Department.
- B. Maintain an additional avenue of communication with members of the community. This includes answering questions posed by the community on social platforms.
- C. Maintain an additional avenue of communication to inform media of newsworthy events. This may including: becoming the source of information immediately following a critical incident, dispelling rumors and correcting misinformation, and magnifying the Department's message and instructions when media re-shares posts on their own social media platforms.

- D. Maintain an additional tool that can assist in recruitment.

VII. X (Formerly Twitter)

The goal of the Northampton Police Twitter account is to:

- A. Share timely information with members of the public. This information may consist of such things as vehicle accidents that create traffic issues, road closures, fleeing felons, parking bans, emerging general safety issues, and anything else deemed appropriate by the OIC.
- B. Assist the general police function in ways such as generating tips for major cases by posting a BOLO or wanted poster or even posting pictures of located animals with unknown owners.

VIII. Website

The goal of the Department's website is to:

- A. Provide users an avenue to learn about the personnel, operations, and administration of the department.
- B. Provide information to potential police officer candidates who are interested in joining NPD.
- C. Make positive contributions to the department's public image.
- D. Provide users access to crime scams, alerts, and other preventive information.

IX. New Social Media Accounts

The nature of social media is that there are frequently new platforms that allow public engagement. Any new platforms that are operated by Department personnel must be approved by the Chief of Police. Further, the goals of any future social media platforms shall be consistent with the goals listed above.