

NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Internet Sites/Web Pages/ Social Networking		AOM: S-106
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced:		Issuing Authority <hr/> Jody Kasper Chief of Police
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I. Introductory Discussion

- A. Professionalism, ethics, and integrity, are of paramount importance in the law enforcement community. To achieve and maintain the public’s highest level of respect, we must place reasonable restrictions on our conduct and appearance, as well as holding employees to these standards of conduct, whether on or off-duty. An employee’s action(s) must never bring the department into disrepute, nor should conduct be detrimental to the department’s efficient operation.
- B. The developments in electronic technology (computers, software, programs, and information available through the internet and web sites) are an invaluable resource to assist us in the performance of our duties. Nevertheless, this technology has the capability to act as a double-edged sword, in that it presents opportunities to access and use technology in both legitimate and illegitimate ways. Whether on duty or off duty, in uniform or in plain clothes, all employees represent the Northampton Police Department.

II. Purpose

- A. The purpose is to establish departmental policy concerning personal web pages or internet sites when referencing the Northampton Police Department. Furthermore, it is to ensure that employees use appropriate discretion in the use of references to the Northampton Police Department, so as to not discredit or disrespect the department, to ensure that the release (directly or indirectly) of information concerning crimes, accidents, or violations of ordinances or statutes, to persons outside the department is not

disseminated, and to ensure that all employees treat as confidential the official business of the department. Finally, this policy is not intended to hinder the professional development of any employee.

III. Policy & Limitations

- A. Photographs or other depictions of departmental uniforms, badges, patches, marked units, other departmental property or on-duty personnel, including incident scenes, shall not be posted on internet sites by department personnel without the approval of the Chief of Police.
- B. Employees are prohibited from posting, transmitting, and/or disseminating any pictures or videos of official departmental training, activities, or work-related assignments, without the expressed, written permission of the Chief of Police.
- C. Employees shall treat as confidential, all the official business of the Department.
- D. No employee shall release, either directly or indirectly, information concerning crimes, accidents, or violations of ordinances and/or statutes to persons outside the department, except as authorized by departmental policy under *AOM A106 Public Information Function*.
- E. No employee should gossip about the affairs of the department with persons outside the department.
- F. No sexual, violent, racial, ethnically derogatory material, comments, pictures, artwork, video, or other reference, may be posted along with any department approved reference.
- G. Employees shall not post any material on the internet that brings discredit to or may adversely affect the efficiency or integrity of the Northampton Police Department. In addition, no employee shall use the internet in any way, shape, or form, in order to disparage or harass another department or city employee, as well as any other citizen.
- H. Employees should consider the possible adverse consequences of internet postings, such as future employment, cross-examination in criminal cases, and public, as well as private, embarrassment.
- I. Employees are reminded to exercise good judgment and demonstrate personal accountability when choosing to participate on social networking sites. Use of these types of sites while on duty shall be restricted to official departmental business only.
- J. Employees becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting on any website or web page in violation of the provisions of this policy are strongly encouraged to notify their supervisor immediately for follow-up action.