

EAST RANGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

POLICY
119

REV 03/10/2025

Purpose

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight.

Policy

It is the policy of the East Range Police Department to utilize social media platform to connect with the community, creatively solve problems and increase transparency. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by East Range Police Department.

Scope

This policy governs the use of social media by East Range Police Department Employees and makes recommendations regarding personal use of social media as it relates to employment with the East Range Public Safety Board and East Range Police Department.

Definitions

The following phrases have special meanings as used in this policy:

1. **Blog** means; A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."
2. **Page** refers to: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
3. **Post** refers to: Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
4. **Profile** refers to: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
5. **Social media** refers to: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to;
 - a. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, Messenger, Telegram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Douyin, Kuaishou, X, Weibo, QQ, Qzone, Reddit, Pinterest, Quora, Xiaohongshu, JOSH, Teams, Skype, Tieba, Threads, Viber, imo, Discord, Twitch, Line, Likee, Picsart, Vevo, Tumblr, Zoom, Meet, iMessage, Face Time,

6. **Social Network** refers to: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
7. **Speech** refers to: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
8. **Web 2.0** refers to: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media. E.G. Web 2.0, dark web.

Procedure

1. Establishing presence

- a. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief executive or his or her designee and shall be administered by the departmental public information officer or designee.
- b. Social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
 - i. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content.
 - ii. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.
- d. 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.
 - i. Pages 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.
 - ii. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

2. Department Sanctioned use

- a. Department personnel representing the department via social media outlets shall do the following:
 - i. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
 - ii. Identify themselves as a member of the department.
 - iii. 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 photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.
 - iv. Not conduct political activities or private business.
- b. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

- c. 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.

3. Employee personal use of social media

This section of the policy covers employee personal use of social media affecting the workplace and /or the department's ability to perform its mission. The personal use of social media can have bearing on employees in their official capacity as they are held to a higher standard by the community. Engaging in prohibited speech outlined in this policy may be used to undermine or impeach an officer's testimony in legal proceedings and therefore may be provide grounds for discipline.

- a. Employees may express themselves as private citizens on social media sites as long as employees do not;
 - i. Make, share or comment in support of any posting that includes harassment, threats or violence or similar conduct.
 - ii. Make, share or comment in support of any posting that ridicules, maligns, disparages, expresses bias or disrespect toward any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class of individuals
 - iii. Make, share or comment in support of any posting that department personnel are engaged in behavior reasonably considered to be unlawful or reckless toward public safety.
 - iv. Make, share or comment in support of any posting that violates any law or ERPD policy.
- b. Employees shall make reasonable efforts to make social media pages private in an effort to protect themselves.
- c. Employees may not post privileged information or represent the East Range Department on their personal social media networks.
- d. Employees may not use their ERPD email address to register a personal account on social media.

REFERENCE AND REVISION

- a. REFERENCE
 - i. Bemidji Police Department Policy #156
- b. REVISIONS
 - i. 03/10/2025 – Initial Policy – ERPSB Approval Date