

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

### NOTICE 14.5

July 27, 2022

**TO:** All Department Personnel

**FROM:** Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE FOR OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT  
SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS – UPDATED

**Purpose.** The purpose of this Notice is to inform Department personnel of the required procedures for establishing and maintaining an official Department social media account and to remind personnel of their obligation to adhere to Department policies and standards of conduct when using social media platforms for official business or personal use.

**Background.** Social media accounts are forms of electronic communication (such as online services for social networking, blogging, or disseminating content) where users form online communities to share information, ideas, messages, and digital content such as video and audio recordings. Social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat and many other online services that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking.

Social media is a powerful tool through which the LAPD can disseminate important information to the community, listen to voices and perceptions of the Department, connect directly with our community members online, and build public trust. *The Department's use of social media must create a place online where users can engage in a discussion of ideas, policies, and topics without significantly infringing on the ability of other users to do so.* Social networks and other online media are excellent tools for engagement and two-way communication, but inappropriate use may undermine the public's faith and trust in the Department and its mission. Accordingly, this Notice serves as an important reminder that existing Department policies, procedures, and standards of conduct are applicable to all Department personnel when using social media platforms for professional or personal use. In addition, this Notice provides new procedures for opening and maintaining a social media account to conduct official Department business.

### OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

An official Department social media account is defined as an account on a social media platform that is managed by a Department employee and which represents the Los Angeles Police Department through the use of logos, badges, or written content. Official Department social media accounts may be used for official business such as:

- Disseminating public safety bulletins, messages, and other authorized official information;
- Providing crime prevention and emergency preparedness tips;

- Promoting Department-sanctioned events;
- Promoting recruitment efforts;
- Seeking assistance for criminal investigations; *and*,
- Promoting two-way communication and outreach with community members on issues relevant to the official business of the Department.

**Establishing an Official Department Social Media Account.** All Department employees or entities seeking to establish an official Department social media account (e.g., geographic Area offices, specialized units, senior lead officers, and youth programs officers) shall forward an Intradepartmental Correspondence, *Form 15.02.00*, to the Commanding Officer, Public Communication Group (PCG), that includes the following information:

- A description of the platform to be used (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or another social media service);
- The account's username and handle (if applicable);
- The account's password;
- The names and serial numbers of employees authorized to manage or post information on behalf of the Department;
- A concise narrative setting forth the purpose of the account and how the account will promote the Department's mission and serve the community; *and*,
- *A statement that the account is a limited public forum in which the restrictions stated in this policy and a hyperlink to this policy are applicable.*

The Commanding Officer, PCG, shall review the Intradepartmental Correspondence and determine whether the account promotes the best interests of the Department. If approved, the Commanding Officer, PCG, will notify the employee or entity via Department email or other official correspondence.

**Existing Official Department Social Media Accounts.** Account holders for official Department social media accounts in existence on the date of this Notice, shall complete an Intradepartmental Correspondence as set forth above for approval by the Commanding Officer, PCG.

**Command Staff Exception:** Captains or above, and civilian-equivalents, are not required to obtain approval to establish a social media account representing their official position or Department command. However, Captains or above and civilian-equivalent command staff are required to complete an Intradepartmental Correspondence, *Form 15.02.00*, notifying the Commanding Officer, PCG, of the establishment or maintenance of an official Department social media account. The request shall set forth:

- The platform being used (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or another social media service);
- The account's username and handle (if applicable);
- The account's password;
- The names and serial numbers of employees authorized to manage or post information on behalf of the Department; *and*,
- The purpose of the account and how the account promotes the Department's mission and serves the community.

**Change of Authorized User for Official Department Social Media Accounts.** If an account holder makes administrative modifications such as changing the account name, handle, authorized users, or other features, the account holder shall notify the Commanding Officer, PCG, via an Intradepartmental Correspondence as soon as practicable.

**Passwords and Security.** The integrity and security of official Department social media accounts is critical to preventing unauthorized use or the unauthorized disabling of an account. Employees should use strong passwords and two-factor authentication security features when available. Employees should also store the password to any official Department social media account in a safe location and not share it with any unauthorized users.

*Comments to Department Social Media Posts.* Because one of the acknowledged purposes of Department-sanctioned social media is to create a place for online exchange of ideas without significantly infringing on the ability of other users to do so, the Department encourages the public to make comment to its social media posts. Nonetheless, comments or responsive content (e.g., images or video) that are in violation of the policies set forth by the platform on which they are posted (e.g., a comment posted on Facebook that violates Facebook's code of conduct for users) should be reported to the platform for review.

*If comments or responsive content from users do not violate the platform's policies for use they are still potentially eligible for moderation by the Commanding Officer, PCG.*

*Comments containing any of the following are subject to potential removal and or restriction by the Commanding Officer, PCG:*

- *Off topic comments, including comments outside the jurisdiction of the City (or specific Department sites) or unrelated to the original post;*
- *Obscene content;*
- *Threats to any person or organization;*
- *Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale;*
- *Conduct in violation of any federal, state, local, or municipal law;*
- *Encouragement of illegal activity;*
- *Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; and,*
- *Content that violates the privacy or security of an individual or a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, or any party.*

**Blocking.** Employees using an official Department social media account may block or mute users who **repeatedly** violate any of the above referenced rules allowing for removal and restriction by the Commanding Officer, PCG. Absent exigent circumstances, personnel shall first consult with the Commanding Officer, PCG, for direction prior to blocking or muting a user participating in an official Department social media account.

Employees should also report violations of the terms and conditions of any social media platform by a user or follower to the appropriate social media platform.

**Email Addresses.** Official Department Social Media Accounts shall be registered to a Department email address.

**Posting of Content – Investigations and Officer Safety.** Personnel shall not post to social media platforms, information that would compromise an on-going investigation or compromise officer safety by revealing ongoing or future tactical operations or disclosing confidential tactics or techniques. In addition, official Department social media accounts shall not be used to post photographs of arrestees (including booking photos), victims, or witnesses except for approved investigative purposes or with the person’s consent.

**Posting of Content – Official Department Positions.** Statements on issues of public importance posted to official Department social media accounts are official representations of the Los Angeles Police Department. Therefore, personnel shall only post statements or other content which is consistent with official Department positions or otherwise authorized by appropriate Department authorities.

**Posting of Content – Political Positions, Endorsements, or the Promotion of Commercial Products.** Personnel are prohibited from political activity or endorsing commercial products or services in violation of City ethics prohibitions, Department policies and the standards of conducts applicable to Department employees.

**Inapplicability to Undercover or Other Approved Investigative Uses.** This Notice does not apply to the use of social media accounts for undercover activities or other approved investigative purposes.

**References.** The following documents contain additional information regarding social media procedures and responsibilities:

- Department Manual Section(s) 1/210; 1/210.35; 1/270.20; 1/270.25; 1/330; 3/405; 3/406.10 and 3/788.40.
- Operations Notice No.12: Posting or Publishing of Advertisement for Department-Sponsored Events, dated October 16, 2008.
- Legal Bulletin Volume 32, Issue 1: Limitations on a Police Officer’s First Amendment Right to Freedom of Expression, dated February 27, 2008.
- Los Angeles Police Department Social Media User Guide 2015.

Any questions regarding this Notice may be directed to the Public Communications Group, at (213) 486-5900.

  
MICHEL R. MOORE  
Chief of Police

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