

Ocean City Fire Department  
**FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER**

FCGO: 20-003

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Page | 1 of 2

TO ALL OCFD Personnel  
FROM Fire Chief Richard R. Bowers, Jr.  
SUBJECT OCFD Social Media Policy



**Ocean City Fire Chief – General Order**

*The Ocean City Fire Department uses social media to broaden the reach of communication, public information and engagement with the community we serve. The following general order provides procedures and guidelines for maintaining official fire department social media sites/accounts in order to ensure communication remains professional in nature and is always conducted in accordance with the Town of Ocean City's policies, practices and professional standards.*

*Engaging in social media and social networking activities is a form of speech. This general order also addresses the use of personal social media accounts; however, nothing in these rules is intended to unlawfully restrict a member's right to discuss as a private citizen, matters of public concern, nor engage in concerted activity with co-workers.*

**I. Official Social Media Accounts:**

Social media managers/administrators should ensure that content representing the department is:

- Grammatically correct
- Free of spelling/typing errors
- Presenting in an appropriate tone
- Provided in a timely manner

**Operational Use: (on scenes / incidents)**

1. When using social media (including written posts, photographs and/or video) during an incident/investigation, all postings must be approved by one of the following individuals: Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, OCVFC President, Ryan Whittington, via Chain of Command, and/or Jessica Waters. This includes any/all calls for service.

### **Training / Non-Operational Use: (ceremonies, fire prevention)**

1. When using social media (including written posts, photographs and/or video) during departmental training, stand-by's, community outreach activities, and other non-operational activities, page managers/administrators shall ensure the following:
  - a. Information provided is factually accurate and complies with all Town of Ocean City Polices and Departmental Standard Operating Guidelines.
  - b. Posts shall not display horseplay and shall reflect the image of our department and its members.
  - c. It is the responsibility of all administrators to check the social media account for recent postings to make sure posts will not be made back-to-back and/or are redundant in nature.

### **Archives and Retention of Public Information:**

1. Communications posted on/received through official social media sites are considered public information. Before removing information (posts and/or comments) our department has an obligation to preserve and archive the public record. Page administrators/managers should not remove any content from the page without contacting Ryan Whittington and/or Jessica Waters.

## **II. Use of Personal Social Media Accounts**

Employees may express themselves as private citizens on social media; however, should keep in mind that the lines between public and private, personal and professional can be blurred. Employees and members identifying themselves as a part of the Ocean City Fire Department should be cognizant of the fact that published social media content may be explored, transmitted, shared and archived by external entities regardless of privacy settings. As a result, what is posted on a personal social media site may be forwarded to co-workers and supervisors, which could negatively impact the work environment and have consequences in the workplace.

1. No member of the department shall use social media (to include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) during their response to the scene, on the scene, and when returning.
2. Keep the "headline test" in mind when posting content or pictures to social media sites. Use your best judgement – if it is not something you would feel comfortable seeing in the media, or being seen by co-workers, other Town of Ocean City employees, supervisors or management, do not post it.

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this Fire Chief General Order is to provide guidance to the Ocean City Fire and EMS Department members to clarify the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate use of social media.*