



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

TOPIC: Social Media Use	S.O.G. # 1.20
Approved by: Noah Hillstrom, Chief	Created: 08/11/2018 Approved: 8/20/2018

I. Purpose

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad (CARS) endorses the use of social media platforms to enhance the public trust in CARS operations, and to share important information with the public. This procedure establishes CARS position on the use and management of social media and provides standards for management, administration, and oversight of this important communications medium.

II. Definitions

- 1) *Blog*: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.
- 2) *Communications*: expression or transmission of information, data or opinions through spoken or written words or images, including, without limitation: posting on social media any words, symbols, photographs, videos, recordings or other content.
- 3) *Page*: The specific portion of a social media site where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individual with administrator rights.
- 4) *Political activities*: includes, but is not limited to: voting; registering to vote; soliciting votes or endorsements on behalf of a political candidate or political campaign; expressing opinions on political subjects and candidates; displaying a political picture, sign, sticker, badge, or button; participating in the activities of, or contributing financially to, a political party, candidate, or campaign or an organization that supports a political candidate or campaign; attending or participating in a political convention, caucus, rally, or other political gathering; initiating, circulating, or signing a political petition; engaging in fund-raising activities for any political party, candidate, or campaign; acting as a recorder, watcher, challenger, or similar officer at the polls on behalf of a political party, candidate, or campaign; or becoming a political candidate.
- 5) *Post*: Content that an individual shares on a social media site (the act of publishing content on a social media site is commonly referred to as “posting”).
- 6) *Profile*: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- 7) *Social Media*: A category of Internet-based sites, networks and other resources that enable the user to generate content and encourage other user participation, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, etc. (There are thousands of these types of sites and this is only a short list.)
- 8) *Social Networks*: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

III. Procedure

This procedure provides standards of conduct for all CARS personnel. When a member of CARS engages in a communication pursuant to his or her official duties, he or she is not communicating as a private citizen for First Amendment purposes. Failure to adhere to the standards set forth within this procedure may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Standards of Conduct

A. Administration of CARS Sponsored Social Media

- 1) Members responsible for developing and engaging in any communication on CARS sponsored social media sites and pages shall:
 - a. include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of CARS presence on the particular platform, and include the CARS logo;
 - b. link to the CARS official website;
 - c. design content and communications appropriate for the intended target audience(s) (such as the community, civic leadership, members or potential members);
 - d. indicate that the sites/pages are maintained by CARS and display contact information for the person responsible for the specific site;
 - e. state that opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of CARS leadership or Board of Directors;
 - f. clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure;
 - g. clearly indicate that CARS leadership reserves the right to remove posted material that contains:
 - Obscenity
 - Personal attacks
 - Spam or advertising of any kind
 - Promotions of particular products, services or organizations intended to profit a particular entity
 - Infringement on copyrights and trademarks
 - Advocating illegal activities
 - Inappropriate links
 - Off-topic comments
- 2) All CARS sponsored social media sites and pages shall be approved by the Chief, or designee, and shall be administered by the Assistant Chief or designee.
- 3) Content on social media sites and pages shall adhere to all applicable laws and regulations.
 - a. Social media content is subject to open public records laws and, as such, records retention requirements may apply to particular items of social media content.
 - b. Content must be managed, retained, stored and maintained in format(s) that

can be retrieved throughout any applicable record retention periods, in compliance with applicable laws, such as the Virginia Public Records Act and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

B. Members Use of Social Media Pursuant to their Official Duties

1. Members use of social media or social networking for or in connection with any CARS business shall adhere to the following:
 - a. Members shall identify themselves as a member of the department;
 - b. Members shall conduct themselves at all times in accordance with CARS policies and standards of conduct;
 - c. Members shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
2. Members using social media or social networking for or in connection with any CARS business shall **not**:
 - a. Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any records, photographs, videos or recordings, of any nature whatsoever, of or related to: emergency incidents; or workplace activities, operations, work assignments, training or discussions; unless given express permission in advance from the Chief or designee;
 - b. Post any content containing profanity;
 - c. Post any content proscribed within Section C.2., following below within this procedure;
 - d. Discuss, promote, or otherwise engage in any personal or private business;
 - e. Use personally-owned devices to manage CARS social media outlets without permission from the Chief or designee;

C. Members Personal Use of Social Media

1. Due to CARS interest in promoting and protecting the effectiveness of the public services it provides, certain standards will apply to members personal use of social media for communications that relate to, or that may adversely affect, their membership.
2. A member's social media communications **must not**:
 - a. adversely affect the individual's ability to perform his or her duties; be disruptive to the squad; or result in the refusal, reluctance or inability of other members to work with the member;
 - b. adversely affect the public's trust or perception of CARS. Examples of communications that may violate this standard include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. communications that contain obscenity
 - ii. communications which indicate or imply that the member discriminates against any individual(s) or group(s) in the provision of public services

- iii. communications intended to demean, intimidate or harass any individual or group because of race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sex, or sexual orientation.
 - iv. communications that include any individual's "personal information", as defined in Virginia Code §2.2-3801, or any individual's medical information, which the member has obtained in the course of his or her employment.
 - v. communications that suggest or imply CARS has officially endorsed any political party, candidate or campaign
 - vi. communications that indicate, suggest or imply that the member has engaged in unlawful conduct in the squad,
 - vii. communications that indicate, suggest or imply that the member has engaged in conduct outside the squad, when the nature of such conduct is such that it calls into question the ability of the member to effectively or lawfully perform his or her duties, or the ability of the member to perform job duties in a manner that does not create a risk of harm to the member or others
 - viii. communications that depict or describe the member's participation in any act of violence, or in any hate crime, against another individual
 - c. coerce or attempt to coerce any subordinate member to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a political party, candidate, or campaign, or to discriminate against any member or applicant for membership because of that person's political affiliations or political activities;
 - d. communications that indicate or demonstrate that the member is engaged in conduct prohibited by Virginia Code §2.2-3103 or other provision(s) of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act.
3. No CARS member shall use or post any photograph, video, drawing, or other representation of any CARS: logo, uniform, badge, seal, or slogan in any manner that (i) defiles or brings dishonor to such items, or (ii) uses such items for the members' own economic benefit.
4. CARS does not actively monitor communications by its members on non-CARS sponsored social media. However, to the extent that CARS becomes aware of any such communications that violate the standards set forth within this policy, those communications may subject the member to disciplinary action.