



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policy ID: Human Resources
Subject: Social Media Policy
Creation Date: October 23, 2012
Prepared By: Human Resources Department
Approved By: City Manager
Legal Review: Laura Gordon

DESCRIPTION: Social Media Policy

I. Policy:

The utilization of social media outlets provides entities with a unique opportunity to use new and emerging networking technology to reach out to respective target audiences in promoting and sharing relevant information.

It is the policy of the City of El Paso (hereinafter referred to as the "City"), to utilize social media for the purpose of promoting and sharing information about City municipal services, programs, initiatives and events in accordance with the City's Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

The City endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity with employees, customers, citizens and other stakeholders. The City is committed to providing an environment that encourages the use of computers and electronic information as essential tools to support the City's business. The City provides a computer system, with Internet access, to its employees to enable them to communicate with each other and with the City's internal and external customers in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The electronic communications systems and equipment is owned or leased by the City and is provided to employees for their use in connection with their work. It is the responsibility of each employee to ensure that this technology, including the access of social media websites, is used in accordance with these policies and procedures.

A. Reason: This policy establishes the City's procedures and guidelines for appropriate usage and the management, administration, and oversight of social media by City employees, board members and volunteers. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media as described in general terms and is not to be construed as an all-inclusive policy.

B. Philosophy: Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the City and its personnel to communicate with the public regarding community education, community information, and other related organizational and community objectives and services. This policy identifies possible uses of communication methods via social media that may be evaluated and utilized as deemed necessary by City leadership. The City also recognizes the role that social media tools may play in the personal lives of its employees. The City is not attempting to regulate the personal private use of social media by employees, board members and volunteers in a personal capacity, but the City recognizes that the personal use of social media can have an effect on City employees in their official capacities. This policy is intended to provide guidance as well as restrictions and prohibitions on the use of social media by all City employees, volunteers, or anyone serving in an official capacity on behalf of the City (e.g.: City Boards) that implicates the City's interest. Departments may create a policy that provides additional department-specific requirements. Any departmental policy must be in reasonable conformity with this policy and approved by the Public Affairs Office (PAO). This policy does not cover City-sponsored social media (i.e., our official blog, Facebook page or Twitter account); the PAO utilizes a policy/procedure that provides administrative oversight

II. Definitions:

- A. Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.
- B. Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- C. Profile:** Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.
- D. Social Media:** A category of Internet-based resources that enable the user to generate content and encourage other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites: Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, and other sites. (There are thousands of these types of sites and this is only a short representative list.)
- E. Social Networks:** Platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- F. Speech:** Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

III. Procedure

A. Policy Guidance

1. Departmental Use:

The identifiable City symbols, logo, or seal, as well as the department's logo, may not be used for commercial purpose or gain. These symbols, logos or seals must not be used to present the City in a false light.

2. Official Use Policy

Social media is a valuable communication tool when providing information, including, but not limited to

- a) road closures,
- b) special events,
- c) weather emergencies, and
- d) major ongoing events in the jurisdiction that affects the entire community.

3. Personal Use

- a) Employees, board members and volunteers are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performance of their duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or is untrue, presents the City in a false light or divulges confidential information or plans about the City or their department.
- b) Employees should primarily use the City's electronic communications systems and equipment for business-related purposes. While occasional personal use of social media websites is permitted, such use should be limited to times when the employee is not required to be performing any duties for the City, when the use will not conflict with the use of the systems or equipment by any employee who desires to use it for business purposes, and may not in any event be used in a manner contrary to any of the provisions of this policy or any other policies that cover electronic communications or workplace technology.
- c) Employees should not expect that anything that is sent or received using the City's electronic communications systems and equipment is the employee's private property. In fact, it belongs to the City. Employees should not have any expectation of privacy with respect to those communications, whether communicated via social media sites or otherwise. The City may, from time to time, as it sees fit, monitor, review, intercept or gain access to communications employees initiate or receive on the City's electronic communications

systems and equipment. Employees' use of the City's systems will constitute consent to such monitoring, reviewing, interception or access. The City may, but has no requirement to, provide notice, either before or after any review of communications.

- d) This policy should not be interpreted or construed to restrict any rights employees may have under the National Labor Relations Act.
 - e) City employees are cautioned that their speech either on or off duty, and in the course of their official duties that has a nexus to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities may not necessarily be protected speech under the First Amendment.
 - f) Employees, board members and volunteers shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment or assignment without written permission from their Department Head or designee.
 - g) Employees may not use social media in connection with or to support any business ventures other than those of the City while using City own or controlled property/resources.
4. Regardless of any privacy settings on various social media platforms, social media is not private. Information becomes public the moment it is published on the Internet. Assume that co-workers and members of the City's management will see anything and everything posted online, and act accordingly.
5. Employees, board members, and volunteers are prohibited from the following:
- a) Offensive, demeaning or disruptive messages are prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, messages that are inconsistent with the City's policy concerning equal employment opportunity and its policy prohibiting sexual and other unlawful harassment. Under no circumstances may the City's systems or equipment be used to transmit foul, indecent, scandalous or improper information, via social media or otherwise. Moreover, the use of the City's electronic communications systems and equipment in support of political, religious or other controversial causes is an inappropriate use of the system. Additionally, offensive racial or sexual comments are expressly prohibited.
 - b) Employees may not divulge information gained by reason of their position or authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements;

or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the City or their department without express authorization from the Department Head and PAO. Employees may not use social media in a manner that compromises the confidentiality of the City's confidential or other sensitive information.

- c) All employees, board members or volunteers should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization otherwise known as defamation to include:
 - 1) Publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;
 - 2) Using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
 - 3) Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
 - 4) Employees should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.
 - 5) Employees should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by City or departments at any time without prior notice.
- 6) Social media content is subject to open records laws.

B. Process

1. If, at any time, an employee is uncertain about how to apply these policies and procedures or has any question about his or her participation in social media activities, the employee should contact a member of the Human Resources Department or management. Each employee bears his or her own personal responsibility to follow this policy and use good judgment with his or her social media activities. If an employee has any doubt whether online activities violate this policy, he or she should ask a member of the Human Resources Department or management *before* engaging in the conduct. Tweeting or Facebooking first, and asking questions later, is not acceptable and will not immunize any improper

conduct or violation of this policy.

2. All employees are expected to comply with the City's Internet Acceptable Use Policy and any revisions or amendments that may occur from time to time.

E. Violations

1. Reporting violations: Any employee, volunteer or anyone serving in an official capacity on behalf of the City who becomes aware of, or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or webpage in violation of the provision of this policy should notify his or her supervisor, the PAO or the Human Resources Department immediately.
2. Employees have an affirmative duty to report any conduct that violates this policy to an immediate supervisor or manager; the PAO; manager or member of the Human Resources Department.
3. Any violation of this Social Media Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

APPROVED BY:



Joyce Wilson, City Manager

10/24/12
Date