

## **Social Media Policy for Toms River Fire District #1**

**Scope** – This policy applies to all member classifications of any of the Toms River Volunteer Fire Companies located within Toms River Township Fire District #1 and is effective as adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners at its regularly scheduled meeting on the January 5, 2011.

Members whose use of social media is in contravention of this policy will be subject to the Disciplinary procedure. Such Discipline may, when appropriate, result in termination of membership from any of the respective Volunteer Fire Companies.

This policy is intended to protect the assets, reputation, and productivity of the Toms River Township Fire District #1 and to ensure compliance with its legitimate policies. It is intended to protect the privacy rights of the members of the public and of the members of the respective fire companies.

This policy is not meant to infringe on the right of a member to disclose to a supervisor or an appropriate public body any activity, policy or practice which the member believes violates any law or regulation or which is fraudulent or criminal.

Social media content which does not identify the individual as a member of Toms River Fire Company; does not discuss the Company, its business or its members; does not discuss calls or responses made and members of the public for which those calls or responses were made; and, which is purely about personal matters, would normally fall outside this policy.

**Objective** – To clearly establish guidelines for what members of the volunteer fire companies cannot do using Social Media as it relates to matters concerning Toms River Fire District #1.

**Social Media defined** – Social media is the name commonly given to interactive communication technology websites; primarily those which enable users to interact and communicate by sharing content such as opinion, media (text, video, images and audio) knowledge and interest.

Typically, the term encompasses many variations of online media. Examples include blogs, micro-blogs (Twitter) podcats, 'wikis' (such as Wikipedia), message boards, social networking websites (Facebook, MySpace) and media content sharing websites (such as Flickr, YouTube).

The paramount feature of all of these platforms is that the central focus is on *user generated content*.

**Prohibitions** –

- Do Not Share Confidential Information. The confidentiality of any citizen or patient receiving our services shall be maintained by excluding all identifying information including the incident date, individual's name, age, sex, location or medical, mental or physical condition. Such information shall not be disclosed without the express written consent of the individual or individuals involved. For a minor, such consent must be given by the parent or legal guardian.

Communication with news media regarding any Firematic matter without authorization from the District Chief, a TRFC Chief Officer or Incident Commander is strictly prohibited.

- Do Not Engage in Social Media at Inappropriate Times. In responding to a call, the sole purpose of Fire District #1 is to provide fire protection and other services to the public. Thus, any activity not related to such purpose and which potentially detracts from the providing of such service is not allowed. Therefore, the personal use of electronic devices (including cell phones, PDAs, netbooks, and MP3 players) is prohibited from the start of an assignment through its completion.

The use of personal film/digital cameras and imaging devices, including cell phones, is strictly prohibited from the start of an assignment through its completion.

The use of Social Media to communicate details, including but not limited to tactical or operational decisions, in regard to an emergency call to which one responded is strictly prohibited.

- Do Not Use Offensive Language. The use of derogatory, profane, sexual, or otherwise offensive messages while identifying oneself as having an affiliation with Toms River Fire District #1 or one of the volunteer fire companies under its authority, or in discussing Fire District #1 or any of the companies or their employees or members, is strictly prohibited.
- Do Not Complain About Fire District Matters. The use of Social Media to complain about, or bring disrepute to, Fire District #1 or any of the volunteer fire companies under its authority, their employees, members, or assignments is strictly prohibited. Any complaints should be made through the chain of command.
- Do Not Defame. The use of Social Media to defame, libel or slander Fire District #1 or any of the volunteer fire companies, its members, or other agencies is strictly prohibited.