

International Association of Chiefs of Police

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Off-Duty, On-line Policing Your Officers on Social Media



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October 24, 2010

Boise Police Department Special Order

Number: 10-05	Effective Date: March 1, 2010	Modifies: 2009 BPD Policy Manual, 11.00.00 Conduct, 11.06.00 Social Networking Policy
Subject: Social Networking Policy		

INSTRUCTIONS: *This Special Order modifies language in 2009 BPD Policy Manual, 11.00.00 Conduct and new subsection 11.06.00 Social Networking Policy. Post this special order in your policy manual and on page 156, handwrite "NOTE: This policy is modified by Special Order 10-05, effective at 0001 hours on March 1, 2010" 11.00.00 Conduct, 11.06.00 Social Networking Policy updated.*

11.06.00 Social Networking: Personal Online/Internet Content

Members of the Boise Police Department (BPD) are reminded that their conduct both on and off duty must meet a high standard. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct related to materials posted on the internet or disseminated electronically. No member shall allow or permit any digital media to be posted to the internet that:

- Could reasonably be interpreted to express the opinions of the Boise Police Department. A member may comment on a subject of general interest and of value and concern to the public provided that, in doing so, the member does not suggest or imply that the views expressed are those of BPD.
- Has both a reference to the member being affiliated with BPD and which contains content that is unprofessional, unbecoming or illegal, such as lewd sexual conduct, excessive alcohol consumption or similar behaviors. Members are reminded that courts may scrutinize the credibility of a witness from unintentional sources like the internet.
- Could be reasonably interpreted as having an adverse effect upon agency morale, discipline, operation of the agency, safety of staff or perception of the public.
- Contains any recording, including images, obtained while engaged in the performance of enforcement activities, tactical situations, or anything that will have an adverse effect upon the agency. Digital images such as shop with a cop, promotion ceremonies, etc., are permissible.

Clarification on appropriate postings, if needed, shall be directed to Command Staff.

Note: This does not apply to internet postings that are posted for legitimate law enforcement purposes.



Boise Police Department

Official Department Use of Social Networking; Strategies and Philosophies

drafted July, 2010

Important Note: *THERE ARE NO FORMULAS, no hard, fast rules that cover every situation. Objectives and resulting practices of official social networking by those designated to represent the Boise Police Department will differ and evolve with the unique circumstances of any given situation. The following strategies and philosophies are meant as general guidelines to be updated as needed, and are not necessarily pertinent to official department web site management.*

Be Useful, Be Relational, Be Reliable

Darren Rowse, author *ProBlogger*, ProBlogger.net

Objectives: Public safety, real and perceived, is essential to preserving the high quality of life Boise citizen's value and enjoy.

The Boise Police Department's goals with social media are to expand the public safety education that enables citizens to make safe choices for themselves, their families and their neighborhoods; and to improve communication between citizens and their police department.

The Boise Police Department believes increased opportunities for sharing information with citizens furthers the department's mission to Protect, Serve and Lead our Community to a Safer Tomorrow, and meets Boise City's mission of being America's Most Livable City.

Social Media Adoption: Social media networks will constantly evolve. BPD's philosophy is to join and use social networks already proven to be of value to citizens, businesses and other online communities. Because of time and resource limitations, the BPD will not likely be an early adopter of new social media.

Authors, Users: Those designated to author and communicate on behalf of the Boise Police Department via social networking are currently the BPD Communications Director and the Public Information Specialist in the department's Public Information Unit. On duty patrol watch commanders may also issue urgent alerts from the field via Nixle, but are urged to communicate with the on call PIO prior to release.

Social media authors are not to be confused with department web site authors. Several BPD employees are authorized to be web authors, although those outside the PIO office have very limited access and authorization to alter or update content.

Use of Department Equipment: Those authorized to communicate on behalf of the department are authorized to use department computers and devices for official department social networking.

Frequency of Use: To be of value to citizens and the department, social networking sites must remain fresh and updated. Users are advised to place new content on sites frequently. One new post each work day or 4 – 5 per week on Facebook, and potentially several posts per day on Twitter are suggested. Users are urged to avoid over-use, to keep postings engaging and valuable.

Types of Content: As a professional law enforcement agency, postings representing the Boise Police Department must be appropriate and within the department's professional and ethical standards. Choices of words, use of humor and images must be a professional public representation of the department. Those managing social media sites must have a good understanding of community norms, sensitivities, expectations and department policies regarding information release.

Posting of police officer and employee information and photos must follow the same guidelines as the department's media and public records policies, emphasizing sensitivity to officer safety.

Content may originate from within the Boise Police Department, including public safety information, participation by department employees in community events, and news releases generated by the department.

Content may also be generated from outside sources as it relates to the department's mission and social media objectives.

Inappropriate Content: for any department sponsored social media site content that may jeopardize officer safety, compromise an ongoing investigation, violate a crime victims, witness's privacy, including medical privacy would not be acceptable content. Content becoming known as "inside-access", which includes comments or opinions on 'behind the scenes' police operations is also typically inappropriate for posting. Inappropriate content posted onto department social media sites and may be a violation of department policies and subject to discipline.

Site Monitoring: Members of the BPD Public Information Unit are charged with monitoring official department social media sites. Monitoring of comments should be daily as time and resources allow. Public comments that are profane, personal attacks or otherwise inappropriate or are off topic are subject to removal. Repeat offenders should be blocked.

Employee compliments/complaints: Compliments or complaints regarding the professional duty or conduct of BPD employees will be treated like any other public input and forwarded to that employees supervisor for review.

“The moment you respond, it’s amazing the effect it will have on the fans. Just knowing that somebody’s on the other end, it has a very positive effect.”

Ramsey Poston, NASCAR, Managing
Director of Corporate Communications

Facebook:

The philosophy for management of the Boise Police Department Facebook page is essentially the equivalent of a newspaper feature page or a community bulletin board; giving “fans” a wide variety of posts designed to be informative, valuable and interesting. This can include everything from a breaking news event of major community concern to a humorous cartoon. Fb content can inform the community about upcoming department related events, provide timely crime prevention information, or be a photo of a BPD K9 wishing “fans” a good day.

Fb allows the department to join an interactive community and make a human connection, emphasizing the community involvement that is essential to building positive relationships and ultimately to successful and safe policing.

Typically, routine news releases are not posted on the BPD fb page. BPD’s objective is not to compete with local news web sites for daily run-of-the-mill arrests & crime reports. Nor does the department want to necessarily attract to our fb page the same uncivil comments that often accompany daily crime stories on news sites.

Crimes or police incidents where public involvement could help solve a crime may be appropriate for fb. Factors to consider would include; is there a crime prevention message to go along with posting of a suspect photo; is there a high likelihood of the suspect victimizing others; is the suspect photo or description detailed enough to make it likely someone could accurately identify the suspect.

Urgent breaking news, such as a missing child or emergency notifications involving evacuations, criminal suspects threatening an area, etc, may also be appropriate for fb posting.

Breaking news posts must be monitored and updated. If news items are posted on fb, to maintain “fan” trust, “fans” must be able to trust the department (just like local media) to keep them updated as to developments or conclusions.

BPD allows “fans” to comment on wall postings and the fan-only page. Monitoring of comments should be daily as time and resources allow. Public comments that are profane, personal attacks or otherwise inappropriate or are off topic are subject to removal. Repeat offenders should be blocked (note the site monitoring guidelines above). Comments that provide discussion or different or opposing viewpoints should be allowed to remain provided the discussion remains civil.

Twitter:

The philosophy for management of the Boise Police Department Twitter page is essentially the equivalent of a newsfeed or the old fashioned teletype, often based on speed and quick release of information. Consistent use of Twitter allows the Boise PD to be seen as a credible, accurate, timely source of information for followers. Twitter is useful for a broad range of police and public safety communications, including immediate alerts of traffic, fire or other potential hazards, locations of traffic patrols, community event info, crime prevention information, daily felony arrest reports (via Nixle), twitpic photos of wanted suspects, response to citizen inquiries and social interaction.

Monitoring of tweets mentioning @BoisePD should be daily as time and resources allow, and response to citizen inquiries via Twitter should be as prompt as possible.

Citizen concerns regarding traffic or other crime issues should be forwarded to the appropriate investigating unit.

BPD does monitor direct messages responding to citizen questions or concerns, but dm's should be discouraged.

Twitter posts of breaking news or department activities should relate to incidents that are urgent or of broad interest, not necessarily every news advisory or release.

Breaking news tweets must be monitored and updated. If news items are tweeted, followers must trust the department (just like local media) to keep them updated as to developments or conclusions.

Nixle:

BPD uses Nixle because of it's ease of use, it's immediacy, and it's ability to connect with Twitter.

Nixle is an instant message/alert system like Twitter but for citizens who aren't into the social aspect of twitter.

Nixle allows for one-way release of official information only.

You Tube:

The Boise Police YouTube Channel features videos produced by BPD as educational public safety, crime prevention or police services videos. They may include Public Service Announcements, features on Boise PD specialty units and Boise PD's own coverage of community events.

YouTube allows citizens to navigate to the material from avenues other than the Boise Police website.

Boise PD is part of YouTube's Content Verification System. This means BPD material uploaded onto YouTube is copywrited automatically, removes any copies of that material that may have already been posted by other sources, and prevents the reposting of BPD material by others.

BPD only uploads material onto YouTube that is owned and produced by the department.

Monitoring of comments should be daily as time and resources allow. Public comments that are profane, personal attacks or otherwise inappropriate or are off topic are subject to removal. Repeat offenders should be blocked (note the site monitoring guidelines above).

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