

ENDWELL FIRE DISTRICT
Rules and Regulations

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	
Number: 2023-22	Adopted: January 04, 2023

The Endwell Fire District acknowledges that the use of technology by emergency services organizations provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization as well as its members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education, and public relations purposes. As such, the Endwell Fire District embraces the usage of this new instant technology to that end.

This policy establishes the Endwell Fire District’s social media and instant technology use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated risks from the use of this technology where possible.

This policy applies to all employees of the Endwell Fire District, volunteer members of the Endwell Fire Department, consultants, and contractors performing business on behalf of the Endwell Fire District.

For this policy, the term instant technology is defined as resources including, but not limited to, instant messaging, texting, paging, and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube, Snapchat, Instagram, Tumblr, and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.

All Department / District social media pages shall be approved by the Fire Chief / Board of Fire Commissioners or their designees. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and policies including the records management and retention requirements set by law and regulation.

The Internet and other information-sharing devices are global entities with no control over users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The Endwell Fire District / Fire Department is not responsible for information found in these sources.

The Endwell Fire District understands the value of such technology but also understands the concerns and issues raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns or portrays this organization to the public illegally or negatively whether intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, no information, videos, or pictures gathered while on Endwell Fire District / Fire Department business (this includes emergency calls, meetings, drills, details, training, or anything obtained on the organization property or at the organization functions) may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire Chief or the Fire District’s Public Information Officer.

Under this restriction, members and employees are prohibited from disseminating or transmitting in any fashion photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical assistance. Any such transmission may violate New York State Laws and/or the HIPPA privacy rights of such individuals and may result in a criminal and/or civil proceeding being commenced against

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members and employees violating this provision of the policy.

This policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as we are a public entity, it has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization, its members, and the public we are sworn to protect. Members and employees are advised that their speech directly or by utilizing instant technology either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that have a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities may not be protected speech under the First Amendment. Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Fire Department / Fire District, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affects the public perception of the department / District may be sanctioned.

As a basic concept of constitutional law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. However, airing personal workplace grievances does not raise a matter to a level of public concern.

In that regard, members and employees must follow the following guidelines when discussing the Fire District / Fire Department on Social Media Websites:

- Do not make any disparaging or false statements or use profane language.
- Do not make any statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or protected class of individual.
- Make clear that you are expressing your personal opinion and not that of the Fire District/Fire Department.
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information.
- Do not violate Fire District/Fire Department policies including the Code of Ethics.
- Do not display Department or District logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items without prior written permission.
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer, or employee of the Department or District without prior written permission.
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer, or employee of the Department or District on any online dating or similar sites.
- Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department or District without authorization.
- Do not post pictures of comments that violate the privacy rights of Department or District personnel or would violate any Department / District and/or any state or federal laws.

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- Consider the guidelines stated in the Department / District Policy which prohibits the commission of sexual harassment and discrimination against your fellow personnel when deciding to send any communications which include pictures, comments, and other forms of reference to the personnel you work or serve with and do not violate that rules and laws.
- Do not assume that the willingness of a fellow worker or volunteer who is the subject an offensive or improper communication to accept and not complain about the communication prevents the communication from violating the rights of other workers and volunteers.
- Do not communicate pictures and/ or personal information concerning a fellow employee or volunteer because placing this information into the public domain may subject them to harassment, stalking, and other dangers.

The Endwell Fire District owns the rights to all data and files in any owned computer, network, cell phone, or another information system. The Endwell Fire District also reserves the right to monitor electronic mail messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems) and their content, as well as any use of the Internet and of the computer equipment used to create, view, or access e-mail and internet content. Members and employees must be aware that the electronic messages sent and received using Endwell Fire District equipment are not private and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, release, and archiving by District and Department officers at all times. The Endwell Fire District / Fire Department has the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the network or on individual computers or storage media to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws.

Inappropriate use of the Internet and instant technology while on Endwell Fire District / Fire Department business may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination as an employee of the Fire District or volunteer member of the Fire Department.

Endwell Fire District / Fire Department computer equipment is to be used for fire district/department business and purposes in a professional and businesslike manner.

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INSTANT TECHNOLOGY USES 2011-02