



<b>Subject: Social Media</b>	<b>POLICY NO: 220.1 – 220.5</b>
<b>DISTRIBUTION: Patrol; Detention; and Administration</b>	<b>NO. PAGES: 6</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: May 2, 2023</b> <b>REVISION DATE: May 2, 2028</b>	
<b>SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: None</b>	

**220.1 PURPOSE:**


The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines for the use of social media by the Yuma County Sheriff's Office ("Office") personnel. The Office endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this office's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

**220.2 POLICY:**

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the Office and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The Office also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some Office personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on Office personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Office personnel.

**220.3 DEFINITIONS:**

- A. Blog:** A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."
- B. Page:** The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.
- C. Post:** Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.
- D. Profile:** Information that a user provides about themselves on a social networking site.

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- E. **Social Media**: A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation.
- F. **Social Networks**: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.
- G. **Speech**: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.
- H. **Wiki**: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

#### 220.4 **PROCEDURE**:

##### **On-The-Job Use**

#### **A. Office-Sanctioned Presence**

##### 1. Determine strategy

- a. Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.
- b. Where possible, the page(s) should link to the Office's official website.

##### 2. Procedures

- a. All Office social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Sheriff or their designee.
- b. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the Office and shall have Office contact information prominently displayed.
- c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
  - i. Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content
  - ii. Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies
- d. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the Office.
  - i. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the Office reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal threats.
  - ii. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

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### 3. Office-Sanctioned Use

- a. Office personnel representing the Office via social media outlets shall do the following:
  - i. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Office and, accordingly, shall adhere to all Office standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
  - ii. Identify themselves as a member of the Office.
  - iii. Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to Office training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission from the Sheriff or their designee.
  - iv. Not conduct political activities or private business.
- b. The use of Office computers by Office personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization from the Sheriff or their designee.
- c. Office personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the Office's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission from the Sheriff or their designee.

### **B. Potential Uses**

1. Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:
  - a. Missing persons
  - b. Wanted person
  - c. Gang participation
  - d. Crimes perpetrated online (e.g.0 cyberbullying, cyber stalking/); and
  - e. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer
2. Social media can be used for community outreach and engagement by:
  - a. providing crime prevention tips;
  - b. offering online-reporting opportunities;
  - c. sharing crime maps and data; and
  - d. soliciting tips about unsolved crimes

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3. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to
  - a. road closures,
  - b. special events
  - c. weather emergencies, and
  - d. missing or endangered persons.
4. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.
5. The Office has an obligation to review Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates.
6. Searches should be conducted by a non-decision maker. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.
7. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.
8. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
9. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
10. Every effort must be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

### **C. Personal Use**

Precautions and Prohibitions Barring state law to the contrary, Office personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

1. Office personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of the Office for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the Office.
2. As public employees, Office personnel are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties—that is, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities—is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the Office. Office personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon the Office.
3. Office personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the Sheriff or their designee.

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4. For safety and security reasons, Office personnel are cautioned not to disclose their employment with the Office nor shall they post information pertaining to any other member of the Office without their permission. As such, Office personnel are cautioned not to do the following:
  - a. Display Office logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages.
  - b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as a peace officer of the Office. Officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.
5. When using social media, Office personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the Office's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, Office personnel are prohibited from the following:
  - a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, religion, or protected class of individuals.
  - b. Speech involving themselves or other Office reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
6. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer's testimony in criminal proceedings. Office personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination.
7. Office personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this Office without express authorization from the Sheriff or their designee.
8. Office personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for
  - a. publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group, or organization (defamation);
  - b. 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;
  - c. using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission for an exploitative purpose; or
  - e. publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
9. Office personnel 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.

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- 10. Office personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Office at any time without prior notice.
- 11. Reporting violations: Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify their supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

**220.5 AMENDMENT:**

This policy is subject to amendment, revision and/or rescission as required

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