



# DESCHUTES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Policy Title: <b>Social Media</b>	Effective Date: July 13, 2020	Policy Number: <b>4.34</b>	
Accreditation Reference:	Review Date: September 27, 2026	Supercedes: June 17, 2015	Pages: 5
Attachments:	 L. Shane Nelson, Sheriff		

## I. PURPOSE

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Deschutes County Sheriff's 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.

## II. POLICY

Social media provides a valuable means of assisting the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and its members 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 members. The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some agency members. The personal use of social media can have bearing on agency members 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 agency members.

## III. DEFINITIONS

*Blog* means 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."

*Online Alias* is an online identity encompassing identifiers, such as name and date of birth, differing from the user's actual name, date of birth or other identifiers.

*Online Alias Access* are Internet-based searches involving the search and acquisition of information from sites that require an email address, password or other identifiers for which an online alias is utilized.

*Page* means the specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

*Post* is the content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

*Profile* is the information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

*Social Media* means the category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, MySpace), microblogging websites (Twitter, Nixle), photo-and video-sharing sites (Flickr, Youtube, SnapChat), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit).

*Social Networks* are online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

*Speech* means expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

*Wiki* means web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

## **IV. ON-THE-JOB USE**

### **A. Agency-Sanctioned Presence**

1. Determine Strategy
  - a. Social media pages shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's presence on the website.
  - b. Social media pages shall link to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's official website.
  - c. Social media pages shall state the opinions expressed by visitors to the page do not reflect the opinions of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.
  - d. Social media pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks.
  - e. Social media pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
2. Procedures
  - a. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Sheriff or his designee and shall be administered by authorized designees.
  - b. Social media pages shall clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and shall have the agency contact information prominently displayed.
  - c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies.
  - d. Content shall be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws, e-discovery laws and policies, and record retention schedules.

### **B. Agency-Sanctioned Use**

Authorized Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members representing the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office via social media outlets shall do the following:

1. Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and, accordingly, adhere to all agency standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.
2. Identify themselves as a member of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.
3. Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or make comments concerning pending prosecutions and pending or potential civil lawsuits involving the Sheriff's Office.

4. Not transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos related to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's training, activities, or work-related assignment without permission. Members authorized to disseminate images or videos online or through social media that contain agency branding, including but not limited to the DCSO badge or logo, patrol vehicle, or any agency uniform, should thoroughly review any image or video prior to release so as not to bring discredit to the agency. If an authorized member is unsure about an image or video to be released, the member should review the material with the Sheriff, Public Information Officer or his/her designee prior to image or video release.
5. Not conduct political activities or private business.
6. Not use personally owned devices to manage the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's social media activities or for official business without a written agreement.
7. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

## **V. POTENTIAL USES**

### **A. Investigations**

Social media is a valuable investigative tool when seeking evidence or information about:

1. Missing persons
2. Wanted persons
3. Crimes perpetrated online (i.e. cyberbullying, cyberstalking)
4. Photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer

### **B. Recruitment**

Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.

### **C. Community Outreach**

Social media shall be used for community outreach and engagement by:

1. Providing crime prevention tips
2. Sharing crime maps and data
3. Soliciting tips about unsolved crimes

### **D. Time-sensitive Notifications**

Social media shall be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to:

1. Road closures
2. Special events
3. Emergency situations
4. Missing or endangered persons

### **E. Background Investigations**

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting background investigations of job candidates. The following procedures shall be followed:

1. Searches shall only be conducted by authorized background investigators.
2. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with division commanders.

3. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content shall not share information outside of normal background investigation channels.
4. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.
5. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.
6. Every effort shall be made to validate Internet-based information considered during the hiring process.

## **VI. PERSONAL USE**

### **A. Precautions and Prohibitions**

It is important for our agency to ensure that citizens are not misled into believing that certain communications resources are official resources of the Sheriff's Office that are authorized to provide official information when they are not. The only way to prevent misinformation is for our agency to control the dissemination of information under our official agency name.

Nothing contained in this policy shall prevent members from using their personal computers and communications resources to participate in communications on the internet and other communications systems, as long as they do not do so under the name of "The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office."

The use of Deschutes County Sheriff's Office computers by members to access personal social media accounts is prohibited without authorization.

Members have no right to privacy when communicating on a public social networking site, no matter where they connect from. If it is on a site and it can be read, there is no right to privacy.

Barring state law or binding collective bargaining agreements to the contrary, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members shall abide by the following when using personal social media:

1. Members 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 Deschutes County Sheriff's Office for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede their performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.
2. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any privileged, confidential, or case related documents, digital media, or information which they have access to as a result of their employment or otherwise communicate in a manner that violates agency and county policies.
3. For safety and security reasons, members shall not post information pertaining to any other member of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office without their permission. As such, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members shall not to do the following:
  - a. Display Sheriff's Office logos, or similar identifying items on personal web pages;
  - b. Post or cause to be posted photos of agency-owned equipment, such as the Sheriff's Office uniform, duty gear, or vehicles;
  - c. Post visual or personal identification if working, or reasonably expected to work in undercover operations.
4. When using social media, members shall be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members are prohibited from the following:
  - a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.

- b. Speech involving themselves or other Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
- 5. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching a deputy's testimony in criminal or civil proceedings. Deschutes County Sheriff's Offices members thus sanctioned are subject to discipline.
- 6. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members 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 the Sheriff's Office.
- 7. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members 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 explorative purpose; or
  - d. Publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.
- 8. Members shall 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.
- 9. Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, and or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office at any time without prior notice.
- 10. Reporting violations: Any member 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 his or her supervisor immediately.

## **VII. USE OF ALIAS-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA SITES FOR INVESTIGATIVE PURPOSES**

- 1. Use of social media sites for investigative purposes is a valuable tool in law enforcement. As such, use of alias based social media sites is authorized by the Sheriff's Office.
- 2. Members who wish to operate an alias-based site shall advise their immediate supervisor of the social media request. Members who have created and used an online alias prior to the implementation of this policy shall advise their immediate supervisor of such site and follow the guidelines of this policy.
- 3. Supervisors shall review the site information to ensure the validity of the site and to make sure agency objectives are being met. Review of the site shall also confirm that security of the member and the Sheriff's Office is not compromised.
- 4. When genuine criminal activity is observed from the use of an alias-based site, the deputy in control of the site shall generate a report and forward it through the proper channels for investigation.
- 5. Members are cautioned that when using Sheriff's Office systems, there is a risk the Sheriff's Office can be identified as the user. Avoid use of a username or password that can be traced to the deputy or agency; exercise caution when clicking on links in tweets, posts and online advertisements; delete "spam" email without opening the email; and never open attachments unless the sender is known to agency members.
- 6. The use of alias-based social media sites for investigative purposes shall not violate any section of this policy.