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|  | **MILTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**  |
| **S.O.P. 2-57** | **EFFECTIVE DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2009** |
| **DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES** | **APPROVAL: CHIEF D. HARRELL** |
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I. Purpose

Digital technology continues to expand and improve rapidly. Improved technology applications can enhance officer safety, improve investigation techniques, allow citizens to better understand crime and policing issues, and improve overall police efficiency. This technology must also be used by all police personnel on and off duty in a manner that preserves and promotes the image of the Milton Police Department, the individual officer, and the community itself and it is the purpose of this policy to ensure that digital technology is utilized appropriately.

Additionally, since the functions of a police department have a major impact upon the community, standards of conduct for police personnel are higher than standards applied to the general public. In this regard police personnel will conduct themselves in a manner which does not bring discredit upon individuals, the Department, the City of Milton or the community when utilizing social networking sites on and off duty.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Milton Police Department that all personnel will adhere to the procedures and directives outlined in this policy.

III. Definition

Social Networking Site Defined: A social networking site is defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (a) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, and/or (b) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and/or (c) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system, and/or (d) a site that provides a virtual community for people interested in a particular subject or just to "hang out" together, and/or (e) create their own online "profile" with biographical data, pictures, likes, dislikes and any other information they choose to post, and/or (f) communicate with each other by voice, chat, [instant message](http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0%2C2542%2Ct%3Dsocial%2Bnetworking%26i%3D55316%2C00.asp##), videoconference and blogs, and/or (g) the service typically provides a way for members to contact friends of other members. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. These social networking sites include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, all blogs, and others.

Digital Technology defined: Digital technology is defined as all photographs, audio, and video recordings in various mediums including hard copy, cassettes (any format) and digital.

IV. Procedures

A. All employees of the Milton Police Department are prohibited from posting, placing, or having posted or placed by a third party any information relating to their duties or any information they have learned as a result of their duties as an employee of the Milton Police Department on any social networking site, or identify themselves directly or indirectly as an employee of the Milton Police Department. This prohibition shall include, but not be limited to:

1. The posting of any pictures, video, audio, comments, discussion, or other digital technology media of any incident, inquiry, investigation, or all other information relating to the Milton Police Department.

2. The posting of any pictures, audio, or video of any article or equipment governed by the Milton Police Department Uniform and Appearance Policy and/or any equipment or property owned by the City of Milton. This shall include any pictures of any officer whether on or off duty in any part of his/her police uniform or equipment. This shall also include any pictures, images, or artwork of any Milton Police patch or logo and any pictures, images, or artwork of any City of Milton patch or logo unless the posting of such picture or image is granted upon the approval of the Chief of Police.

B. All Personnel are prohibited from updating, posting any comments, pictures, video, audio, or responding in anyway to any comments or inquires to any social networking site, including their own, while on duty unless it is related to an investigation in which a supervisor has knowledge of and has approved this investigative technique.

C. Employees shall not post any material that is violent, sexually explicit, racially or ethnically derogatory, discredits or tarnishes individuals with the Department, the Department, the City of Milton or the community, or show a negative bias to one gender. This restriction shall not prohibit any posting of material that is legitimate public speech involving a matter of genuine public concern.

D. The posting of pictures, information, alerts, or other information to the City of Milton Website or other web based programs utilized by the Milton Police Department to alert residents and civilians of important information unless authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

E. The Milton Police Department utilizes a variety of applications to collect photographs, video, and audio recordings and officers often own personal equipment that has this same ability to collect and/or store digital technology.

1. All pictures, audio or video recorded, collected, captured, or stored by an officer during an officer’s tour of duty, which is related to any official business of the City of Milton, and/or specifically the officer’s duty, is the property of the Milton Police Department whether the employee utilizes departmental equipment or equipment owned by the officer or another person. The Officer shall ensure that digital technology collected as evidence or digital technology that has or may have evidentiary value is treated, collected, stored, and documented as evidence. The storing of digital technology that was collected as evidence shall not be saved on personally owned digital equipment or in any other manner, once it has been properly saved and logged as evidence.

2. All pictures, audio or video recorded, collected, captured, or stored by an officer during an officer’s tour of duty, which is related to any official business of the City of Milton, and/or specifically the officer’s duty shall not be forwarded or provided in any manner to any person without the approval of a Division Commander or the Chief. The release or forwarding of pictures or audio or video recordings to the Prosecutor’s Office upon its request is permissible.

3. All personnel must be aware that the use of personally owned equipment to collect digital technology may be considered evidence and the equipment or its contents may be inspected, seized, or held as evidence as necessary.

F. Off Duty Conduct

1. Social Networking Sites - Employees of the Milton Police Department are held to the highest ethical standard which is an inherent part of the law enforcement profession. An officer’s conduct, both on and off duty, is the means by which the officer and the police department’s reputation are measured. Officers must maintain high standards of professional and personal conduct at all times. Employees utilizing, posting pictures/audio/video, commenting, or creating a social networking site(s), blogs, and comment oriented websites, must conduct themselves at all times in a manner so as to not bring embarrassment, disgrace, or doubt as to their credibility as an impartial police officer or employee of the Milton Police Department, or does not bring discredit upon individuals, the Department, the City of Milton or the community.

2. Digital Technology - Milton Police Department employees will often find that their status as a police employee or their duty to act as a police officer while off duty enables them to view, assist, or become involved in critical incidents. When this occurs officers shall conduct themselves in accordance with this policy in terms of their use of digital technology in the same manner as if they were on duty.

G. Working Environment

Employees of the Milton Police Department while on or off duty shall never utilize digital technology, blogs, or social networking sites to harass, belittle, or criticize an employee or another person in any manner. The posting of any digital technology to a social networking site or forwarding or sending an email(s) that criticizes, ridicules, or otherwise may potentially embarrass or disgrace another employee or person is prohibited. This shall also include the altering or editing of digital technology that harasses, belittles, or criticizes an employee in any manner.

H. Privacy

Employees should be aware they may be jeopardizing their personal confidentiality and that of other employees by posting photographs or personal information about themselves or other members of the Milton Police Department. In addition, they may be jeopardizing their safety, the safety of their family, their co-workers, and on-going or future investigations. In addition, employees are advised that in the event information has been posted on a social networking site identifying themselves as a police officer, the posting could make them ineligible for specialized positions where anonymity is required.