

Jay Fire District

Jay, NY

Fire District Policy and Procedure

Policy Name: Social Media policy

Date Issued: May 12, 2012

Date Effective: May 12, 2012

Revised: January 2020 – format only

Review Date: January 2020

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

This policy establishes the Jay Fire District's social media and instant technology use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated risks from the use of the technology were possible.

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

For the purposes of 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, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, 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 of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The Jay Fire District is not responsible for information found on these sources.

The Jay 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 in an illegal or negative manner (intentional or unintentional). Therefore, no information, videos, or pictures gathered while on Jay Fire District/Fire Department business (this includes emergency calls, meetings, drills, details, trainings, or anything obtained on organization property or at organization functions) may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire District's Public Information Officer.

Under this section, 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 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 means of instant technology either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that has 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 constitutional concept of law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. However, airing personal workplace grievances does not raise a matter 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 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 publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department or District without authorization.

The Jay Fire District owns the right to all data and files in any owned computer, network, cell phone or other information system. The Jay Fire District also reserves the right to monitor electronic mail messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems) and their content, as well as any and all use of the Internet and of computer equipment used to create, view, or access email and Internet content. Members and employees must be aware that the electronic messages sent and received using Jay 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 Jay Fire District has the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the network or on individual computers or storage media in order to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws.

Inappropriate use of the internet and instant technology while on Jay 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.

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

By Order of Board of Fire Commissioners - Jay Fire District

Chairman Board of Fire Commissioners