



# Social Media Policy

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## Purpose:

To provide guidance and structure regarding the corporate and personal use of social media tools within the EPS.

## Statement of Principle:

As communication evolves, social media websites and other tools are vital to the overall communications strategies for the EPS.

## Definitions:

*Definitions listed in this section apply to this document only with no implied or intended organization-wide or EPS Policy and Procedure Manual wide use.*

**Content** – Anything posted to social media, including but not limited to text, audio, photographic, video or multimedia files.

**Contractor** – Any person or other entity contracted to perform any services for the EPS.

**Employee** – Any employee of the EPS, sworn or civilian.

**Official Purpose(s)** – Any use of social media that is done on behalf of the EPS pursuant to direction or authorization by the Chief or a designate of the Chief.

**Personal Purpose(s)** – Any use of social media by an employee that is for any purpose other than Official Purposes, regardless of whether the use is on-duty or off-duty, at work or not, or using EPS equipment or personally owned equipment.

**Post** – The act of placing any content of any kind on social media, or a specific instance of content of any kind having been placed on social media.

**Social Media** – Any online platform, application, website, account or technology enabling the sharing of electronic, user-generated content with other users or the public. It includes but is not limited to: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Twitch, Tumblr, Reddit, YouTube, blogs, micro-blogging sites, content communities, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and wikis.



## Policy Statement:

### A. General:

1. This policy applies to and is intended to provide guidance for all employees and contractors of the EPS in the use of social media for personal purposes and official purposes. Where this policy refers to “employee(s)” it shall also be taken to refer to contractors unless otherwise stated.
2. This policy does not and is not intended to impose any complete restriction on the free exchange and expression of information or opinions, however it does create some restrictions in various manners and circumstances, and extends the EPS’ policies and existing standards of conduct, ethics, professionalism to the use of social media.
3. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. For sworn employees, this policy shall be considered to operate in concert with the *Police Act* and the *Police Service Regulation*, as amended from time to time.
4. This policy may be updated and amended from time to time without formal notice. It is the responsibility of all employees who use social media to regularly inform and update themselves on the content of this policy.
5. This policy does not apply to social media activities by an employee in the course of a recognized and legitimate criminal investigation or in the course of intelligence collection efforts, or related to public safety or potential criminal activity of others. This exception will include situations where an employee must, as part of their duties, create or use a fake social media account or profile for legitimate law enforcement purposes.

### B. Use of Social Media:

1. Only the Chief, the Chief’s designate or an employee with written authorization from the Chief or the Chief’s designate may post on social media for official purposes.
2. No employee may create or maintain a social media site or post content to social media representing, or which could reasonably be perceived to represent, the EPS or any division, area of, or group within the EPS unless they have express written authorization to do so from the Chief or the Chief’s designate.
3. When authorized to post on social media for official purposes, an employee must:



- a. Only use an account/username that has been approved by the EPS.
  - b. Ensure the employee's status as a representative of the EPS is evident.
4. The EPS recognizes that employees may occasionally need or want to use social media for personal purposes during work hours and/or using the EPS's equipment, networks and other IT and communications systems, however EPS only permits such use subject to the following requirements and conditions:
  - a. It must occur only during non-working time in a manner and time that does not interfere with the employee's duties or productivity.
  - b. It will be subject to monitoring in accordance with EPS' policies and procedures.
5. Employees must not use social media for personal purposes or official purposes in a way that violates EPS policies or procedures or any other law or legislation including the *Police Act* and *Police Service Regulation*. Activity that violates laws, policies or procedures in any other forum is likely to also violate them in an online forum. As some examples, employees' use of social media must not involve posting, publishing, "liking", or otherwise suggesting agreement or any form of support for content that:
  - a. Ridicules, maligns, disparages, expresses bias or disrespect toward any race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other protected class or characteristic.
  - b. Harasses, threatens violence or other similar conduct.
  - c. Suggests that the EPS or any employee is engaged in behavior reasonably considered to be unlawful or reckless toward public safety.
  - d. Compromises or has the reasonable likelihood of compromising any criminal investigation or prosecution.
  - e. Is insubordinate, demeaning, ridiculing, defamatory or disrespectful regarding the EPS, its employees, or its activities.
  - f. Violates any legislation or any policy or procedure of the EPS.
6. Employees must adhere to the "Terms of Use" and other contractual requirements of the social media provider.



7. Unless they have been given express written authority otherwise, employees may not use “EPS” or “Edmonton Police” or “Edmonton Police Service” or similar iterations of those names in their user or account name, profile description or other identifying elements of a social media account except for the purpose of identifying their current employer and/or work experience on LinkedIn. Employees using LinkedIn must be mindful of other requirements within this policy and ensure they are followed when using this social media platform. For example, any description of EPS work experience on LinkedIn should be limited, and not negatively impact the EPS and its employees, as outlined under section 13 of this policy.
8. Employees may not use their EPS email address or contact information in social media for personal purposes, including in setting up the account.
9. Employees must be cognizant that any content posted to a social media account or site that is public may be accessed at any time, reproduced and reposted or “forwarded” to different and more public forums and used in any number of ways, with or without their knowledge, by anyone including members of the media, members of the public, EPS personnel, and individuals involved with the justice system including lawyers, judges, witnesses, and accused or convicted criminals. There is no guarantee that anything will remain private, and privacy cannot be assumed, regardless of user privacy settings or other access controls.
10. In using social media, employees must recognize that their employment carries a duty of loyalty to the EPS, and also that their actions may affect their workplace. Employee actions or statements through social media, including those made for personal purposes, that disparage the EPS or its representatives, that harm or could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the EPS or its standing with the public that it serves, that lead to refusal or inability of other employees to work with the employee, or that otherwise breach policies or procedures, may result in discipline up to and including termination, and/or other directives or requirements.
11. Employees must not use social media in any way that reveals any information that may be considered confidential without express written authorization from the EPS.
12. Employees must be cognizant that any content posted on social media that directly or indirectly suggests that they are an employee of the EPS could reasonably lead the viewer or recipient of the content to believe that it is representative of the EPS or reflective of its values. Employees must take all reasonable steps to ensure that this is not the case unless they are using social media for official purposes.



13. It is strongly recommended that sworn members not disclose or allude to their status as EPS officers on social media being used for personal purposes. Because content posted to social media is likely to be permanently archived or captured in some way, where an individual is identifiable as a police officer their content on social media can have negative impacts on various things, including but not limited to officer safety, criminal investigations, the ability of the officer to testify or the credibility of such testimony, the ability of the officer to serve in certain assignments or otherwise effectively carry out their duties, the EPS itself and the EPS's ability to fulfil its mission and obligations to the public.
14. Except when using social media for official purposes, employees must be clear in their social media activity that they speak on their own behalf and wherever possible use a disclaimer (for example "The views on this account/posting reflect my personal views only and not the views of my employer"). However, use of a disclaimer does not absolve the employee from compliance with this and other EPS policies – employees must remember that anything said online can reflect on the EPS, even if a disclaimer is used. The EPS encourages professionalism, respectful conduct and honesty in any social media activity.
15. An employee must consult with their supervisor, and either of them should consult with Human Resources Division, if they have any uncertainty about the appropriateness of any content that they or other employees have posted or intend to post on social media.
16. Upon learning or being notified of any content that is considered to be in violation of this policy, the employee will make all reasonable efforts to remove the content from the social media platform in question.