

POLICY 213: SOCIAL MEDIA

ADOPTED: JUNE 20, 2017

Policy:

The County appreciates that social media can be a rewarding way for employees to share information about themselves, and to interact with people in the community and around the world. Because County employees serve the public, however, and potentially are subject to public scrutiny of their on and off-duty conduct, use of social media carries with it risks and responsibilities of which employees must be aware. This is especially true for those employees who are employed in a supervisory or managerial capacity, although it applies to everyone. This policy sets forth the County's guidelines on employee social media usage.

213:1 General Provisions

1. "Social media" shall include all ways of communicating with others via internet, including, but not limited to, use of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit, or Instagram; communications on blogs, bulletin boards, wikis, chat rooms and on-line journals; file-sharing including, but not limited to, Dropbox, Airdrop, or Google Drive; and items posted in comment sections to stories published on-line by traditional media outlets such as newspapers and television stations.
2. Employees are solely responsible for what they post on social media. Remember that many postings can be viewed worldwide and are archived "forever," meaning that they cannot be deleted once posted, or are archived even if deleted and that seemingly "private" posts can easily be shared with a wide audience via a single contact in your closed network. It is also easy to capture short lived messages (like Snapchat) and rebroadcast them in a more permanent format despite the originator's intent.
3. Unless communications via social media are part of an employee's regular job duties, employees are not to represent themselves as spokespeople for the County. Similarly, if commenting about the County or its policies or services, employees whose job duties do not include social media communications must make clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity, rather than in an official capacity, and that their views do not represent those of the County or of other County employees. Employees may not post something about the County, or about County employees, that they know to be false.
4. In general, while employees have the right to comment freely on social media about matters of public concern—issues or events of political, social, or other importance to our community—the comments must not be unduly disruptive to the County's operations, or interfere with the employee's job duties.
5. Whether a comment is on a matter of public concern or not, employees must always be courteous when interacting on social media with citizens and fellow employees. The County's policies on discriminatory remarks, unlawful harassment, and threats of violence all apply to employee posts on social media.

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6. Employees are not prohibited from using social media to communicate with each other about pay and working conditions. However, employees must avoid posting material about work that reasonably could be construed as malicious, obscene, or threatening, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. An example of prohibited conduct would be offensive or obscene posts deliberately intended to harm a co-worker's reputation, or the use of racial, ethnic, or gender slurs to refer to other employees or County officials. Do not engage in conduct on-line that would be prohibited in the workplace.
7. Employees may not use County e-mail addresses to register on social networks or blogs that are not official Lee County social media accounts. Official Lee County social media accounts should be registered to a Lee County e-mail address as approved by the department Director and Technology Services.
8. Employees may not use social media or file sharing applications to evade the requirements of Florida's Public Records Law, or the Government-in-the-Sunshine Law, or to reveal information which is confidential or exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Law.
9. Unless social media postings are part of an employee's regular job duties, employees may only post to social media consistent with Limited Personal Use guidelines set forth in County Policy Number 204 while on duty.
10. Employees may not evade these guidelines by posting anonymously or under a screen name.