



Southport Police Department

Policy #

4.12

Effective Date: xx/xx/2016

Authority:

Thomas L. Vaughn

Chief of Police

Social Media

POLICY

All members of the Southport Police Department are reminded that **professionalism, ethics and integrity** are of paramount importance in the law enforcement community. Members are held to the same department standards of conduct whether on or off duty. An employee's actions must never bring the department into disrepute, nor should conduct be detrimental to its efficient operation.

The developments in electronic technology (computers, software, programs, and information available through the internet and web sites) are an invaluable resource to assist us in the performance of our duties. However, this technology has the capability to act as a double-edged sword; it presents opportunities to access and use technology in both legitimate and illegitimate ways. Whether on duty or off duty, in uniform or plain clothes, we represent the Southport Police Department. Accordingly, to achieve and maintain the public's highest level of respect, we must place reasonable restrictions on our conduct and appearance, both on and off-duty. Due to the advancements in technology and the ever increasing rate at which we use and rely on that technology, our Department must look closely at the manner in which our employees access and use that information.

Officers found to be in violation of this Policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

PROCEDURE AND PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Employees are free to express themselves on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department. However, as public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on-duty or off-duty, may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon the department. Accordingly, the following conducted is prohibited whether the employee is on or off duty:



**Southport Police
Department**

Policy #

4.12

Effective Date: xx/xx/2016

Authority:

Thomas L. Vaughn

Chief of Police

Social Media

1. Employees shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information that is sensitive or confidential in nature to which they have access as a result of their employment, without written permission from the Chief of Police.
2. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the department's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:
 - a. Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals; and
 - b. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.
3. Except when commenting as a citizen on matters of public concern, employees are prohibited from posting any material on a personal or public Internet site that could cause a negative public perception of SOPD or adversely affect the reputation of the department or any of its employees.
4. Employees may not identify themselves as a member of SOPD, either by text, photograph, or image depicting the uniform, badge, patch or logo, in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character or would bring the department into disrepute. Likewise, employees shall not place or allow photographs or depictions of themselves dressed in uniform, and/or displaying official identification, patches and badges, on Internet sites such as "Facebook," or "YouTube," etc., in any manner that reflects a lack of good moral character or would bring unfavorable criticism upon the department without written permission from the Chief of Police.
5. Official department logos and images are restricted to official use only and may not be posted, released, distributed, or replicated without written permission from the Chief of Police.



**Southport Police
Department**

Policy #

4.12

Effective Date: xx/xx/2016

Authority:

Thomas L. Vaughn

Chief of Police

Social Media

6. Employees shall not authorize the use of their names, photographs, or official titles, which identify them as employees of SOPD, in connection with testimonials or advertisements of any commodity or commercial enterprise, including political advertisement, without written permission from the Chief of Police.
7. Photographs of the inside of the SOPD building, as well as any crime scene, shall not be posted by any employee on the Internet or any other public forum, nor shall be given to the media without written permission from the Chief of Police.
8. Employees shall not reproduce, publish or post to the Internet or any other public forum, any photograph(s) depicting SOPD equipment, logos, or other identifying property without written permission by the Chief of Police.