



<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA USE</b>		
<b>Policy #:</b>	AD 9.17	<b>Last Updated:</b>	2021-08-09
<b>Issued By:</b>	SUPPORT SERVICES BUREAU	<b>Approved By:</b>	SURREY POLICE BOARD
		<b>Review Frequency:</b>	AS REQUIRED

**RELATED POLICIES**

AD 5.7 Human Rights and Respectful Workplace (In Process)

AD 9.1 Authorized Use of Computing Environment and Electronic Communications

AD 9.18 Security and Confidentiality of Records and Information (In Process)

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide Surrey Police Service (SPS) Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors with an understanding of the benefits and risks involved in utilizing social media tools including:
- i. encouraging and assisting the community in preventing crime;
  - ii. encouraging and fostering transparency, accountability, and a co-operative relationship between SPS and the community;
  - iii. communicating policing activities of the SPS to the public;
  - iv. directing the manner in which Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors conduct themselves when communicating through social media;
  - v. providing a consistent and approved process for disseminating public information;
  - vi. facilitating access to public information while recognizing the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*; and
  - vii. protecting the confidentiality and security of information as necessary during investigations.
- 1.2. To establish the SPS’s position on the utility and management of social media and provide guidance on its management, administration, and oversight.

**2. SCOPE**

2.1. This Policy applies to all SPS Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors.

**3. POLICY**

- 3.1. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors may use social media for official SPS business, related professional purposes, and/or for personal use as described below. Whether working or on personal time, and whether utilizing SPS property or not, the comments that Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors make on social media can influence how the public views the SPS. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors must ensure that all social media communications are respectful, professional, and consistent with their responsibilities as Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors.
- 3.2. The SPS endorses the reasonable use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange, streamline processes and foster productivity.
- 3.3. Employee, Volunteer, Practicum Student, and Contractor conduct on social media (business, professional or personal) must be consistent with the standards outlined in SPS policies (operational and administrative), the *Police Act*, *BC Provincial Policing Standards*, the *BC Human Rights Code*, and other federal and provincial laws and regulations that may apply.
- 3.4. Social media is an important communication tool that SPS uses to engage with the public, partners, businesses, and other stakeholders. When using social media to represent SPS in an official capacity or an implied official capacity, Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, or Contractors, shall not:
  - i. transmit any materials in violation of federal or provincial laws or municipal by-laws;
  - ii. use vulgar, disrespectful, or inappropriate language;
  - iii. duplicate, store, transmit or post threatening, abusive, discriminatory, or obscene material;
  - iv. lobby for political purposes;
  - v. suggest or support illegal activity;
  - vi. post material that is likely to compromise the safety and security of the public or public systems; or
  - vii. advertise or solicit on behalf of individuals, businesses, or not-for-profit organizations.

#### **4. PROCEDURE**

- 4.1. Where possible, SPS sanctioned social media pages shall:
  - i. include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the SPS's presence; and
  - ii. a link to the SPS's official website.
- 4.2. All SPS social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief Constable or delegate and shall be monitored by the Strategic Communications Section.
- 4.3. Where practicable, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the SPS and shall have the SPS contact information prominently displayed.
- 4.4. Official SPS social media pages shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the pages do not reflect the opinions of the SPS, and shall clearly indicate that:

- i. posted comments will be monitored;
- ii. the SPS reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, defamatory statements, and personal attacks; and
- iii. any content posted is subject to disclosure.

4.5. Laws in relation to defamation (libel and slander) apply to social media content.

#### **SPS-Sanctioned Use**

4.6. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors authorized to represent SPS via social media outlets must:

- i. conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the SPS and, accordingly shall adhere to all SPS standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum;
- ii. identify themselves as Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, or Contractors of SPS;
- iii. not refer to or make statements regarding any investigation, its suspects/arrestees, victims, events, or details operational in nature, unless approved by the Lead Investigator;
- iv. not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos related to SPS training, activities or work-related assignments without express written permission by the Chief Constable or delegate;
- v. not conduct political activities or private business; and
- vi. observe and abide by all copyright and trademark restrictions in posting material to electronic media.

4.7. Only Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors who are approved by the Chief Constable or delegate may use SPS supplied equipment to access social media.

#### **Social Media for Personal Use**

4.8. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors are free to express themselves as private persons on social media sites to the degree that their comments do not impair working relationships of the SPS, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, negatively affect the public perception of the SPS or conflict with SPS core values.

4.9. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors should assume that their comments and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and the SPS.

4.10. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors shall not post, transmit or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access because of their relationship with SPS without advance written permission from the Chief Constable or delegate.

4.11. For the safety of Employees, their families, and co-workers, Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors are advised to use caution in the disclosure of their employment or association to the SPS on social media. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors are not to post photographs or information about any other Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students or Contractors, or their family members without their advance express permission.

4.12. When using social media, Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors are reminded that their comments, messaging, and images become part of the public domain. Therefore, Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors are prohibited from using comments:

- i. 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
- ii. involving themselves or other Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students or Contractors reflecting behaviour that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.

4.13. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors using social media for personal purposes must:

- i. follow SPS policies, including those respecting privacy, confidentiality of information, and technology (see AD 9.1 Authorized Use and Security of Communication Equipment; AD 9.18 Security, Confidentiality, and Disclosure of Information);
- ii. if they are connected in any way to the SPS in a social media environment, ensure that they clearly state that all opinions are their own, and do not reflect the opinions of SPS;
- iii. not post content or comments that undermine their relationship with SPS, and/or damage the reputation of or otherwise negatively affect SPS, the Surrey Police Board, an Employee, Volunteer, Practicum Student, Contractor, or the City of Surrey;
- iv. not post support for other people's content or comments that undermine the relationship and/or damage the reputation of or otherwise negatively affect SPS, the Surrey Police Board, Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, Contractors, or the City of Surrey (e.g., through re-tweeting);
- v. not use SPS's logo or trademark for personal use unless specifically authorized; and
- vi. not take or post any photographs or videos of Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students and Contractors on SPS premises, or participating in SPS activities, without express consent from the Chief Constable or delegate regarding the specific post, photograph or video.

4.14. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors must not disclose information gained by reason of their authority, make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements, or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or position of the SPS without advance express authorization.

4.15. Employees, who choose to publicly identify their employment with the SPS, through a social media platform, are encouraged to state in writing that any content they publish, or accounts or pages they link to, express exclusively their own opinions or those of the other individuals concerned, and are not intended to be representative of the SPS. Wording such as the following may be used for this purpose:

"The opinions expressed in my posts and in linked accounts or pages are my own or those of the individuals concerned and are not intended to be the views of the SPS."

4.16. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation or criminal charges for:

- i. publishing or posting false information that harms the reputation of another person, group or organization (defamation);
- ii. publishing private facts or personal information of another person, or information about another person that would be offensive to a reasonable person; or
- iii. using someone else's name, likeness, or other personal attributes without that person's permission.

4.17. Employees, Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors should expect that information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed, reviewed, and used by the SPS at any time without prior notice.

4.18. Any Employee, Volunteer, Practicum Student, or Contractor becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or page in violation of this Policy must notify a Supervisor immediately.

**Expectations/Further Actions**

5. Employees will be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal, if found in violation of this Policy. SPS Volunteers, Practicum Students, and Contractors may have their relationship with the SPS terminated, if found in violation of this Policy.

## **APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS**

“Blog” means a self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. This is short for “web log”.

“Content” means any information published online. Content can include text, photos, documents, videos, audio, or links.

“Contractor” means a person or persons who has access to SPS premises, as defined in this Policy, for the purpose of providing services or supplies to SPS on a contractual basis.

“Employee” means any employee of SPS (including Members and civilian staff).

“Member” means a Sworn Police Officer appointed by the Surrey Police Board.

“Page” means the specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual with administrator rights.

“Post” means when content is published online. It can be in the form of a public post or private message.

“Practicum Students” mean students of a program at a recognized education institution who are engaged at SPS premises for study, research, work experience, etc.

“Social media” means websites and online applications that allow people and organizations to create, share, and exchange content or to participate in social networking.

“Social network” means a dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, and images.

“SPS premises” includes, but is not limited to, any property permanently or temporarily under the jurisdiction of SPS, including land, building, job sites, facilities, parking lots, equipment, vehicles, whether owned, leased or used by SPS and wherever located. The work site of a seconded Employee is considered an extension of the SPS workplace, and therefore SPS premises.

“SPS property” means all assets of the SPS, whether temporary, permanent, owned, leased, or otherwise acquired, including real, personal, or intellectual property, vehicles, chattels, materials, equipment and supplies.

“SPS websites” means official SPS websites and micro-sites.

“Supervisor” means a Team Leader, Manager, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Inspector, Superintendent, Deputy Chief Constable, Chief Constable, and any other person acting in a supervisory capacity who is accountable for a particular area or shift on behalf of the SPS.

“Volunteer” means a person serving SPS who is not an Employee, Practicum Student, or Contractor, as defined in this Policy, and includes those individuals serving on any board(s), commission(s) or committee(s) established by SPS.

“Website” means a place on the World Wide Web that contains information about a person, place or thing and usually consists of many Web pages joined by hyperlinks.

“Workplace” means anywhere activities directly related to the business of SPS occur, including social events where there is potential for adverse effect on the workplace or any location travelled to for a work-related reason.

## **APPENDIX B: REFERENCES**

*BC Provincial Policing Standards*

*Human Rights Code*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210

*Police Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 367