

10.12 Social Media

Personnel Procedures Approved: 5-2-14

1. PURPOSE: To provide guidelines to employees regarding the use of social media.
2. ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED: All departments/divisions.
3. REFERENCES:
4. PROCEDURES:
  - A. Policy Statement: The City understands that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to participate in interactive discussions and share information. However, the use of social media also presents certain risks to the City, including unauthorized disclosure of confidential information, exposure to discrimination and harassment claims, and activity detrimental to the City's mission and functions. To assist in making responsible decisions about the use of social media, the City has established these guidelines. This policy applies to all City of Bothell employees.
  - B. Definition of Social Media: *Social media* are technologies that enable online users to interact and share information publicly or privately with one another. *Social media* include a variety of internet-based communication tools, such as, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, Digg, blogs, and wikis.
  - C. Compliance with City Policy: Employees are required to comply with all City policies and rules that might apply to the use of social media, both on and off duty. In particular, the following policies should be kept in mind:
    - Personnel Policy 10.2 (Code of Ethics)
    - Personnel Policy 2.2 (Anti-Harassment Policy)
    - Personnel Policy 2.3 (Prevention of Workplace Violence)
    - Personnel Policy 3.4 (Conflicts of Interest in Employment)
    - Personnel Policy 10.1 (General Rules of Conduct)
    - Personnel Policy 10.5 (Electronic Communications)
    - Administrative Orders 1.5.2 and 1.5.4.
  - D. Social Media Rules: Social media use, whether on or off-duty, that adversely affects an employee's job performance, the performance of other City employees, or that otherwise adversely affects the City's mission and functions may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Note that employees have First Amendment freedoms of speech and association, and no discipline will be sustained that violates such rights.

1. The following additional rules also apply to employees' use of social media, on and off-duty:
  - Social media content that relates to City business may be a public record subject to retention and disclosure under state law. For that reason, except for when assigned as part of their official duties, employees are prohibited from using social media to conduct City business.
  - Employees are required to protect and maintain the confidentiality of all private and confidential City information.
  - Employees may not create a link from their blog, website or other social networking site to a City of Bothell website if such a link causes the viewer to reasonably believe that the City endorses the contents of the employee's social media site.
  - Employees may not use their City email address or the City's official logo for personal online communications or activities. Although employees may identify themselves as employees of the City, employees shall not identify themselves in a manner that suggests or implies they are speaking as a representative for the City, even when the communication occurs in a private setting. If any confusion is reasonably likely, the employee shall expressly state with a disclaimer that he/she is speaking in a personal individual capacity and not for or on behalf of the City.
  
2. Social Media Use at Work: The City tolerates personal use of its computer resources during employees' authorized rest breaks or lunch periods. On such breaks, employees can access the internet for personal email accounts, personal social media sites and other publicly available websites. The City does not otherwise tolerate use of its computer resources to access the internet for personal reasons. In addition, use of City computer resources is subject to the following rules:
  - Social media should not be used to unlawfully harass, discriminate against, or retaliate against another employee. Social media should not be used to communicate threats in violation of the City's no violence policy.
  - Employees shall not post, upload, or create any social media content that is known to be false, misleading, or fraudulent, or that involves pornographic, sexually explicit, or obscene materials, except as part of law enforcement when assigned as part of their official duties.
  - Employees shall not infringe on the trademark, copyright, or patent rights of others, or violate software licensing agreements.
  - Employees shall not engage in social media for political purposes, including partisan campaigning.

The City's email system is for official City business only. Do not use City of Bothell's email address to conduct personal correspondence for personal use.

3. No Expectation of Privacy: The City prefers that employees use their personal cell phones or tablets to access the internet while on breaks. To the

extent that employees access the internet using the City's computer resources, the employee should be aware that all contents of the City's computer resources and communications systems are City property and employees should have no expectation of privacy whatsoever in any message, file, data, document, facsimile, social media post, conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the City's electronic information and communications system. City email and other electronic records are subject to public inspection and disclosure.

4. Using Social Media Off-Duty: Off-duty, personal use of social media by employees is not prohibited. However, employees are reminded that City rules and policies apply to social media conduct to the same extent as other off-duty conduct, including the terms of this policy.
5. Retaliation Prohibited: The City of Bothell prohibits retaliation against an employee for reporting violations of this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for engaging in protected activity will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
6. Media Communication: Please refer to Administrative Order 1.5.2 regarding the City's policies and procedures for communication with the media.
7. Conduct Not Prohibited By This Policy: This policy is not intended to restrict communications or actions protected or required by state or federal law.