Social Media Policy

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to set a level of expectation for the members of the Town of Menasha Fire Department related to their participation in the taking, editing or disseminating any media that is of activities, emergency or otherwise, that the department may be engaged in. This policy covers the members utilizing personal equipment such as cameras, video cameras, cell phones and cell phones capable of taking photographs and videos. It is to ensure that members who use social media to discuss fire department related matters, do so in a responsible manner that is not disruptive, disrespectful, offensive to others, or harmful to the Town of Menasha Fire Department or the Town of Menasha. Social media includes, but is not limited to the following: blogs, podcast, online collaborative information and publishing systems that are accessible to internal and external audiences, online forums, photo and internet social networks (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter).

Scope:
The fire department cannot prohibit a member from taking videos or pictures of emergency incidents or department activities while he/she is off duty; however, such actions are not authorized by the department and the member will be personally responsible for any civil or criminal liability arising from such actions, including but not limited to, claims of invasion of privacy, defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress, etc. The department also may impose corrective or disciplinary action against the member for such off-duty activities where the activities (i) relate to a bona fide occupational requirement, (ii) are reasonably and rationally related to the member activities and responsibilities of the member, or (iii) there is a conflict of interest with the member’s responsibilities to the department or the appearance of such a conflict of interest.

Members are not permitted to take photographs or videos, whether by handheld camera or camcorder, cell phone camera or video camera, or otherwise, while performing any fire department duty or activity, specifically including during an emergency response, unless taking the photographs or videos are part of the member’s job/position description, the member was ordered to perform the task by a higher ranking officer, or the member obtained prior written authorization from the Fire Chief or his/her designee. Any photograph or video taken while performing any department duty or activity is the property of the department, and is not the personal property of the person taking the photograph or video. Any photograph or video taken on the scene of an emergency incident must be included as part of the incident report and file.

A member may not make personal use of a photograph or video taken while performing a department duty or activity. “Personal use” includes, without limitation, showing or sending the photograph/video to any person; displaying the photograph/video in any area that may be viewed by the public; posting the photograph/video on any blog, wiki, social media website, online photo sharing website, or other area of online publishing or
discussion; or otherwise exhibiting or displaying the photograph/video in a manner that is inconsistent with this policy.

**Social Networking Provisions:**

Specifically, when discussing or posting information about the Town of Menasha Fire Department, its members in any online platform, regardless of whether during or outside of work, the following must be adhered to:

1. Identify yourself. Do not share opinions about the Town of Menasha Fire Department or Town of Menasha related matters anonymously. Use a personal email address as your primary means of identification.

2. Use a disclaimer and write in the first person. Make it clear you are speaking for yourself and not the Town of Menasha Fire Department. Members do not have authorization to speak on behalf of the fire department unless permission is specifically granted by the Fire Chief. As a result, members are not permitted to identify or disclose that they are a member of the Town of Menasha Fire Department when sharing their opinion about the fire department or Town related matters, unless the member has received prior authorization. Information shared via social media is the opinion of the writer only – not the fire department - and this should be communicated to recipients of the information.

3. Be aware of your role in representing the fire department in online social networks. If readers are aware of your identity as a fire department member, be careful how you present yourself to colleagues, customers, competitors and the general public. We must be sensitive to the fact that any comments on a website or social network are public. They are immediately searchable and accessible by others and are subject to being re-published on other social networks or to the media. Be aware that libel, defamation, HIPPA and date protection laws apply to your activities.

4. If someone from the media or press contacts fire department staff about posts made in online forums that relate to the fire department or Town in any way, members are to alert the Fire Chief or Deputy Fire Chief in his/her absence.

5. Do not give out confidential and or proprietary fire department information, patient or customer information. Medical information and records are extremely confidential and should not be disclosed to anyone at any time even if the disclosure is to describe the fire department or any of its members in a positive light. This applies whether the employee is posting to their personal site or commenting on other sites.
6. Be respectful and professional to fire department members, Town businesses, competitors, patients, other fire departments and customers. When you identify yourself as an employee of the Town of Menasha Fire Department within a social network, you are connected to our members and customers. Communicate online with respect for others. Remember that any information shared via social media is public information that could easily be viewed by our members and customers. Use good judgment and strive for accuracy in your communications. If you make an error in a posting, admit your mistake and correct it immediately.

7. When communicating or posting online about the fire department or Town of Menasha related matters, do not send or display any information that may be construed as offensive or harassing. Offensive or harassing messages include, but are not limited to pornographic images, sexual references, racial slurs, comments regarding an individual's gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, national origin, disability or any other characteristic protected by law, or comments that intimated or threaten another person. Please refer to the Fire Department Ethical Statement for more information.

8. When communicating or posting online about the fire department or Town of Menasha related matters, it is unacceptable to communicate or post information that defames the fire department, its members, customers or casts the fire department in a negative light. While your activities outside of work are generally your business, public comments that negatively affect the fire department, Town, its members or customers will not be tolerated.

9. It is Town policy that members use the Town's electronic communications systems, including email and the Internet, exclusively for Town business. Members are not permitted to use the Town’s electronic communications systems for personal communication, including social networking at any time.

10. Fire Department representation via online social medial platforms can only be initiated and authorized through the efforts of the Fire Chief. There can be no official fire department sites or pages on You Tube, Facebook, Twitter, etc, unless they are developed or authorized by the Fire Chief. Any sites or pages existing without prior authorization as required above will be subject to review when discovered and may be amended or removed and persons responsible subject to disciplinary action.
Social Network Review and Monitoring:

All electronic communications and postings via social media channels that discuss fire department or Town related matters will be subject to monitoring and/or search by the Town at any time and for any reason; regardless of whether created during or outside of work time. When online networking affects a member’s job performance, the performance of others or the fire department’s interest, the Town will respond as necessary, regardless of whether the information was posted during or outside of work. Therefore, members may not maintain an expectation of privacy with respect to public, online communications involving the fire department or Town related matters.

Discipline for Violation:

Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including termination in accordance with the Standard Operating Guidelines of the Fire Department or Town Policy.