16.1 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy sets forth the expectations of the Port Washington Fire Department with respect to member and employee use of social media. This policy shall not supersede, limit, abridge or abrogate in any way a member's or employee's right under Federal, State and/or local laws, rules or regulations.

Social Media, as used in this policy, includes all forms of electronic communication through which a person shares information, ideas, personal messages, videos, photographs, pictures and other content as part of an online community.

This policy is not intended to limit the right to freedom of speech or expression of members or employees. Members and employees are free to express themselves as private citizens. This policy has been established to uphold the integrity of the mission of the Department, its members and employees and to maintain the public trust and confidence. Accordingly, the Chief's Office may review and investigate such personal use of social media upon reasonable cause.

Members or employees seeking to represent the Department through social media, shall obtain the express written permission of the Chief's office or his/her designee prior to engaging in such activity. Members or employees engaging in social media with the express written permission of the Chief's office shall, in addition to any direction provided by the Chiefs Office:

1. Properly identify themselves as a member or employee of the Department.

2. At all times conduct themselves as representatives of the Department and accordingly, adhere to all laws and Department rules, policies and orders.

3. Refrain conduct that impairs or impedes the performance of the Department or negatively affects the public perception of the Department.

4. Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark and legal restrictions.

Members or employees may engage and participate in personal use of social media. Members and employees who are off-duty and utilizing property not owned or operated by the Port Washington Fire Department to engage in the personal use of social media do not represent the Port Washington Fire Department or any official position maintained by it. However, existing laws, rules, policies and orders that govern off-duty conduct are applicable to conduct associated with social media. In addition, members and employees engaging in the personal use of social media are:

1. Prohibited from using their rank, title or position in a manner that would imply that they represent the interest or official position of the Department without prior written permission from the Chief's office.

2. Prohibited from publishing any materials or making any statements that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department without authorization from the Chief's office.

3. Prohibited from expressly stating or implying that they are speaking or acting on behalf of the Department or representing or representing the interest of the Department.

4. Prohibited from engaging in any type of social media contact with patients, fire victims, or any members of the public with whom they interact in their capacity as Members or employees, to the same extent contact is prohibited by other means of communication.

5. Prohibited from posting any depiction or illustration of:

    a) the official Department seal, logo, patch, or badge; or

    b) any text, multimedia files, or depictions in a manner that may give the appearance that such is an official site of the Department.

Members and employees are encouraged to seek guidance from the Chief's Office if they have any questions regarding compliance with this policy.

Members and employees are reminded that this policy cannot address every possible circumstance regarding social media use, but that it establishes policies and guidelines to protect the Department and its membership and employees. Any action on social media outlets that is determined to be harmful to the Department, its interests, or its members or its employees may constitute grounds for discipline, including termination.