

Social Media

The increased availability and use of social media platforms provide law enforcement agencies with an opportunity to promote community outreach efforts and highlight crime prevention objectives. However, agencies should also be cognizant of use of social media by their employees and establish guidelines for appropriate conduct.

- Agencies can utilize social media for a **variety of purposes**, to include as an investigative tool, for community outreach and engagement, to make time-sensitive notifications, to inform the media, and as a recruitment tool.
- Agencies should develop a **social media strategy**, which may involve cultivating a personality or persona that will be followed when posting on social networks. Community expectations should be taken into account when determining voice, tone, and use of humor.
- All agency social media pages should include a **disclaimer** that they are not continuously monitored and that visitors should use pre-existing traditional means of communication, such as dialing 911, for emergencies.
- Social media **terms of service** should be established in conjunction with legal counsel. These should address how comments posted on public agency social media pages will be monitored and if or when posts will be deleted or hidden.
- Policies and procedures should also be carefully developed regarding employees' **personal use** of social media. These policies should take into account the employee's individual rights and freedoms to post content while balancing the potential negative impact some content may have on the individual's employment and the agency as a whole.
- For **safety and security reasons**, agencies may elect to prohibit employees from disclosing their employment with the agency and/or displaying agency logos, uniforms, or other identifying items.
- Education and training should be provided to all employees regarding the importance of **privacy settings** for personal use. However, even with privacy settings in place, any pictures, videos, and text posted online could be made available to individuals for whom it was not intended.