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| City of Lawrence Fire Department  General Order | | | |
|  | Ethics Policies | Date: | August 15, 2025 |
| Title: Digital Media Policy – FIRE & EMS | Revised: | August 15, 2025 |
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| PURPOSE: | The purpose of this policy is to establish comprehensive guidelines for the use of digital media, encompassing photographs, videos, audio recordings, and social networking, by all personnel of the Lawrence Fire Department (LFD).  This policy aims to safeguard the privacy rights of patients, victims, department personnel, and the general public, while simultaneously maintaining the professional image and reputation of the LFD. Furthermore, it ensures adherence to all applicable laws, including HIPAA and public records laws, and regulates both on-duty and off-duty conduct to protect the legitimate business interests of the LFD. |
| SCOPE: | This digital media policy applies comprehensively to all personnel associated with the Lawrence Fire Department (LFD), encompassing career firefighters, civilian EMS, administrative staff, and any other affiliated individuals. The policy's scope extends to all forms of digital media, including, but not limited to, photographs and videos captured with both department-issued and personal devices, audio recordings, content published on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, and all emails and text messages related to LFD business.  While this policy acknowledges and respects the rights of free speech and expression, it is implemented to protect the rights of the LFD, its employees, and the public it serves. As a public entity, the LFD recognizes that its employees possess certain First Amendment rights to discuss matters of public concern, such as general safety issues. However, these rights are balanced against LFD's responsibility to maintain order, discipline, morale, its reputation, and other essential business interests. |
| GUIDELINES: | General Principles:   * All digital media created or used by LFD personnel in the course of their duties is the property of the LFD. * Personnel must exercise discretion and professionalism when using digital media. * The use of digital media must not interfere with emergency operations or other duties. * Compliance with all applicable laws, including HIPAA and public records laws, is mandatory. * Under no circumstances should digital media containing patient or sensitive information be stored on shared or local drives accessible by multiple users. * Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.   Photography and Videography:   * Personal cameras and recording devices are strongly discouraged at incident scenes. * Scene imaging is permitted only for official purposes, such as documentation, training, or investigations, and must be conducted under the direction of the incident commander or authorized personnel. * Images containing patient information are subject to HIPAA regulations and must be protected accordingly. * The taking of secret or hidden camera photographs/digital images is prohibited (except pursuant to an official investigation). * Personnel should not pose for photographs that may be perceived as inappropriate or in poor taste at, near, or within incident scenes involving injury, loss of life, or damage to homes, businesses, or other property. Photographs taken for official training, historical documentation, or investigative purposes are permitted, provided discretion is exercised to preserve the dignity of the scene and ensure compliance with General Order 4.02 – Conduct Unbecoming.   Audio Recordings:   * Audio recordings are permitted for official purposes, such as documenting incident communications or training exercises. * Recording private conversations is prohibited without the consent of all parties involved, except as authorized by law. * HIPAA regulations apply to audio recordings containing patient information.     Social Media:   * Personnel are subject to G.O. 8.21 Social Media Policy. * In addition, personnel must not post any content on social media that:   + Violates patient privacy or confidentiality.   + Discloses confidential LFD information.   + Is defamatory, obscene, or harassing.   Department-Owned Devices and Systems:   * Department-owned devices and systems are to be used for official LFD business only. * Personal use of department cameras is prohibited. * Personnel must not install unauthorized software or hardware on department-owned devices. * LFD reserves the right to monitor and access all data on department-owned devices and systems.   Public Records:   * All digital media created or used by LFD personnel may be subject to public records laws. * Personnel must be aware of their responsibilities regarding the retention and disclosure of public records. * All photographs and digital images, except those that are part of an on-going investigation or those that would identify a patient or victim, are public records and available for public viewing and copying.   Review and Approval:   * All digital media intended for public release must be reviewed and approved by the Fire Chief or their designee. * Photographs and digital images may be used for normal fire department purposes such as training, reports, investigations and documentation. Photographs and digital images may be used for public relations, public education and department fundraising.   Cellular Phones:   * Cellular phones may be used on-duty if such use does not interfere with emergency or non-emergency duties. Offensive or obnoxious ringtones should not be used while on-duty, especially during the performance of firefighting, EMS, public relations, or any other details that may be done in the view of public. |
| DISCIPLINARY ACTION: | Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary actions up to an including termination. The extent of the discipline will be determined by the nature of the violation. HIPPA violations will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in possible immediate termination subject to all due process. |
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Robert Wallace, Chief

City of Lawrence Fire Department