

# **DAUNTLESS FIRE COMPANY**

## **SOCAL MEDIA POLICY**

**The Dauntless Fire Company acknowledges that the use of technology by emergency service organizations provides useful benefits including operational awareness, training and the acquisition of useful information for enhanced coordination and organization. Social media also allows for the distribution of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public relation purposes. As such, the Dauntless Fire Company embraces and supports the use of social media for the benefit and the advancement of the Dauntless Fire Company.**

### **PURPOSE**

**The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines with respect to the use of all forms of social media by members of the Dauntless Fire Company.**

**The valued operation of any emergency service department relies upon the public's confidence and trust in the individual members of that department to efficiently and effectively protect and serve the public. As such, any matter that dishonors the name of the Dauntless Fire Company or the department's membership has the corresponding effect of reducing public confidence and trust in the Dauntless Fire Company while also serving to damage the professionalism and heritage of the fire service.**

**While members of the Dauntless Fire Company have the right to access and/or contribute to personal and social networking pages and/or web sites, as members of the Dauntless Fire Company, they will be held to a higher standard than the general public with regards to general conduct and ethical standards.**

**Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Dauntless Fire Company to maintain that higher level of professionalism and entrust that the department membership not engage in conduct that contradicts or impedes upon the mission of the Dauntless Fire Company.**

## **SITUATION**

**The internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available sources may contain material of a controversial or disturbing nature. As such, the Dauntless Fire Company cannot be and is not responsible for information found on these sources.**

**While information gained through technology has obvious value, concerns and issues are raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns, and/or portrays the department in an illegal or negative manner.**

## **GUIDELINES**

- 1. The officers of the Dauntless Fire Company, in cooperation with the department's Information Technology Committee, shall approve all department social media pages.**
- 2. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws and regulations as established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).**
- 3. All social media content shall adhere to the principles of conduct as identified within the Bylaws of the Dauntless Fire Company.**
- 4. No information, videos (including helmet cams) or photos obtained from dispatches, responses, drills, exercises, details or other fire department activity, shall be shared or posted in any format without the approval of the President, Fire Chief, or Fire Officer-In-Charge of the Dauntless Fire Company.**
- 5. Media releases of any type shall not be made in any format without the prior approval of the President, Fire Chief, or Fire Officer-In-Charge of the Dauntless Fire Company.**
- 6. Under this policy, members are prohibited from transmitting, in any fashion, photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical treatment. Any such transmission may violate Pennsylvania state law and/or Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy rights of such individuals and may result in criminal and/or civil proceeding being commenced against members and employees violating the provision of the policy.**

7. **The policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as we are a public entity, and as such, it has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization, its members and the public we are sworn to protect.**

**Members are advised that their speech directly or by any means of social media, that has a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities, may not be protected under the First Amendment.**

**Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Dauntless Fire Company, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers, and/or negatively affects the public perception of the Dauntless Fire Company, may be sanctioned,**

**Furthermore, sharing of sensitive or personal information through social media may be subject to discovery through legal means and may expose the Dauntless Fire Company and the individual forwarding such personal or sensitive information, to lawsuits and legal liability.**

**When any authorized fire company member(s) discusses or makes mention of the Dauntless Fire Company on social media websites, the following guidelines shall be followed:**

- **Do not make any false statements or use profane language.**
- **Do not make any statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage or otherwise express bias against any race, religion or protected class of individual.**
- **Make clear that you are expressing your personal opinion and not stating any opinion that could be perceived as that of the fire department.**
- **Do not share confidential or proprietary information.**
- **Do not violate Dauntless Fire Company's policies including any code of ethics.**
- **Do not release information to the public that has not been authorized by the President, the Fire Chief or the fire officer-in-charge (FOIC).**

- **Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department without authorization.**

**Inappropriate use of the internet and instant technology regarding Dauntless Fire Company business and operations will result in disciplinary actions, escalating up to and including termination as a member of the Dauntless Fire Company.**

**Members should consider the possible adverse consequences if Internet postings, such as future employment and membership in the fire department, legal cross examinations in the court of law, as well as public and private embarrassment.**

**This policy also supports the various social media policies in effect from mutual-aid emergency services meaning our policy extends to all areas of the Commonwealth when acting within or representing the Dauntless Fire Company.**

**ADOPTED: May 19, 2015**

**Ronald J. Springer, President  
Dauntless Fire Company  
Ebensburg, Pennsylvania**