

OBJECTIVE – Franklin County takes no position on the employee’s decision to participate in social media and social networking activities, including, but not limited to Internet postings, personal websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter while the employee is off duty. The County does reserve the right to “monitor and control” County officials and employees use of the Internet, email and social media from County equipment or during work hours. County affiliated departments who have postings, blogs and/or social networking pages on the Internet are also subject to monitoring and control. The County is not limiting an employee’s right to freedom of speech, and this policy will not be interpreted to infringe upon employees’ First Amendment rights. However, it is the right and duty of the County to protect itself from unauthorized disclosure of information (including misrepresentation) and to protect itself and its employees from actions that impair discipline or harmony among co-workers, that interfere with an employee’s job performance, that interfere with the operations of the County’s business, that constitute sexual harassment or concern potential violence, or that have a detrimental impact on working relationships that require personal loyalty and confidence. Franklin County’s Social Networking/Media Policy includes guidelines for employee business and personal use as well as for County-authorized departments utilizing social networking sites for Department Activities and/or County information and the employee’s personal social networking activities. This applies to all executive officers, board members, employees (both management and staff), affiliates, contractors and consultants.

I. General Provisions for Social Networking

Use of social media or technology for purposes of this policy includes, but is not limited to, email, video or wiki postings, sites such as Facebook and Twitter, chat rooms, blogs (whether business-related or personal) and other forms of online journals, diaries or newsletters which may or may not be affiliated with Franklin County or its Department approved Social Networking sites.

All of the County’s employment policies apply to conduct that occurs online in the same way that they apply to conduct that occurs in the workplace. Employee’s on-line conduct must comply with the County’s Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment, Confidentiality, Workplace Violence and Ethics policies.

II. Business Use

County provided electronic communications tools are the property of the County and are provided to facilitate the effective and efficient conduct of County business. Users, authorized by their Department Director, are permitted access to the Internet and electronic communications tools to assist in the performance of their job related duties, i.e. background checks, Department related websites and blogs, and the like. Some users will also be permitted to access and use social media to conduct County business in providing a unique webpage and/or social media access to promote services, education, and citizen safety through their departments as approved by the County. All such use shall:

- A. Use accurate identities and state personal or department affiliation when using communications and/or social media for County business.
- B. Ensure the security of sensitive and/or confidential information when communicating electronically or posting information on internal or external websites including social media sites.
- C. Ensure information is accurate, timely and appropriate when posting to any site. Correct errors as soon as possible, apologizing if necessary.

III. Personal Use

Personal use means use that is not job-related. Policy allows incidental and occasional personal use of the County’s IT resources when approved by the manager of that department. Internet use should not interfere with the user’s productivity or work performance, nor should it interfere with the efficient operations of the

County network. Personal use of social media that refers to any aspect of the work environment should be done in a responsible and professional manner. Management has the right to request that employees refrain from using their personal communication devices during work hours, especially if it is a distraction to other employees or affects the employee's quality of work.

Unless specifically instructed, employees are not authorized to speak on behalf of Franklin County. Employees may not publicly discuss clients, undisclosed products, employees or any work-related matters, whether confidential or not, outside County-authorized communications. Employees are expected to protect the privacy of Franklin County and its employees and clients and are prohibited from disclosing personal employee information, non-employee information, proprietary information and any other non-public information to which employees have access.

Employees using electronic communication and social media for personal use should:

- A. Use their personal email addresses and not those related to their positions with the County when communicating or posting information for personal use.
- B. Be clear that their communication or posting is personal and is not a communication of the County or the Commonwealth.
- C. Users may use a disclaimer when posting opinions or views for personal use such as, "The views expressed on this (website, blog etc..) social media site are my own views and do not reflect the views of Franklin County or of the Commonwealth of Virginia" when appropriate to ensure that these views are not viewed as official County or Commonwealth communications.

IV. General User Requirements (See HR Administrative IT Acceptable Use Policy #1.25 for supportive and additional information)

Follow all applicable County IT and Social Media Policies. Users may not violate any provision of the IT and Social Media policies or any supplemental policy adopted by the County including any laws, regulations or guidelines set forth by Local, State or Federal law. Users shall:

- A. Be responsible and professional in all activities. Employees should conduct themselves in a manner that supports the mission, vision and ethics of the County and the performance of their activities.
- B. Be respectful of the County, the employees, customers, vendors, agencies, Boards and others when posting and communicating information. Users should be sensitive to referring to or including others in their communications and posts and should be aware of any associated potential liabilities. Consent from others may be considered prior to communicating or posting information about the workplace and/or the individual.
- C. In keeping with the Conflict of Interest Act, Chapter 40.1 of Title 2.1 of the Code of Virginia, *County employees are prohibited from using information they have gained while performing their job to further their personal interests.*
- D. Employees who are uncertain whether their interests may present a conflict with their position as a County employee should contact County Administration for clarification.
- E. Employees working in positions with confidential information concerning the plans and affairs of the County, their departments, or other employees shall not discuss such plans or records with persons not authorized to have access to this information. If the employee is uncertain about releasing information, he or she should refer the individual to the County Administrator.

V. Prohibited Conduct – Personal and/or Business Use

Employees are prohibited from engaging in any of the following in their business and/or **personal** online activities and posts. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

- A. Disparaging the County's services, clients, executive leadership, employees or strategy;
- B. Making any intended false or misleading comments regarding County business;
- C. Promoting or endorsing violence;

- D. Promoting illegal activity, including the use of illegal drugs;
- E. Directing any negative comment towards or about any individual or group based on race, religion, gender, disability, age, national origin, citizenship, or other characteristics protected by law;
- F. Disclosing any confidential or proprietary information belonging to the County or obtained by the employee as a result of their employment with the County; and
- G. Posting, uploading, or sharing any recording or images taken in the workplace without express advance authorization.

VI. Employer Monitoring

Employees should have no expectation of privacy nor shall develop any ownership interest in anything created while using the Internet, Intranet, or accessing social media websites through County equipment or facilities for any purpose, including authorized blogging, internet access and department social networking sites.

- A. No user shall have any expectation of privacy in any message, file, image or data created, sent, retrieved, received, or posted in the use of the County's equipment and/or access. The County has the right to monitor any and all aspects of electronic communication and social media usage. Such monitoring may occur at any time, without notice, and without the user's permission.
- B. Your postings can be reviewed by anyone, including Franklin County. Franklin County reserves the right to monitor comments or discussions about the County, its employees, clients, vendors and their industry, including products and competitors, posted on the Internet by anyone, including employees and non-employees.
- C. Franklin County reserves the right to use content management tools to monitor, review or block content on County blogs that violate County blogging rules and guidelines.
- D. In addition, except for exemptions under the Act, electronic records may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and, therefore, available for public distribution.

VII. Personal Employee Blogs

Franklin County respects the right of employees to use and write blogs and use social networking sites as a medium of self-expression and public conversation and does not discriminate against employees who use these media for personal interests and affiliations or other lawful purposes. Employees are expected to follow the guidelines and policies set forth to provide a clear line between you as the individual and you as the employee.

- A. Bloggers and "commenters" are personally responsible for their commentary on blogs and social networking sites.
- B. Bloggers and "commenters" may be held personally liable for commentary that is considered defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous by any offended party, not just Franklin County.
- C. Employees cannot use employer-owned and assigned/issued equipment, including computers, County-licensed software or other electronic equipment, on County time, to conduct personal blogging or social networking activities.
- D. Employees cannot use blogs or social networking sites to harass, threaten, discriminate against or disparage employees or anyone associated with or doing business with Franklin County.
- E. If you choose to identify yourself as a Franklin County employee, please understand that some readers may view you as a spokesperson for Franklin County. Because of this possibility, we ask that you state that your views expressed in your blog or social networking area are your own and not those of the County, nor of any person or organization affiliated or doing business with Franklin County.
- F. Employees cannot post on personal blogs or other sites the trademark or logo of Franklin County or any business with a connection to Franklin County, absent the business having given permission. Employees cannot post County-privileged information or non-public information.
- G. Employees cannot post on personal blogs or social networking sites photographs of other

- employees, clients, vendors or suppliers while engaged in County business.
- H. Employees cannot link from a personal blog or social networking site to Franklin County's internal or external web site.
 - I. If contacted by the media or press about their post that relates to Franklin County business, employees are required to speak with their manager before responding.

VIII. Reporting Violations

Franklin County requests and strongly urges employees to report any violations to supervisors, managers or the HR department. Violations include discussions of Franklin County and its employees and clients, any discussion of confidential, proprietary or non-public information and any unlawful activity related to blogging or social networking.

IX. Discipline for Violations

Franklin County investigates and responds to *all* reports of violations of the social networking policy and other related policies. Violation of the County's social networking policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Discipline will be determined based on the nature and factors of any blog or social networking post. Franklin County reserves the right to take legal action where necessary against employees who engage in prohibited or unlawful conduct.

X. Acknowledgment

Employees are required to sign a written acknowledgement that they have received, read, understood and agreed to comply with the County's social networking policy, IT policies and any other communication related policy.

XI. Departmental/County Authorized Social Networking

The goal of authorized social networking and blogging is to provide and promote web-based sharing of ideas and exchange of information. Authorized social networking and blogging is used to convey information about County products and services, promote and raise awareness of the Franklin County brand, search for potential new markets, communicate with employees and customers to brainstorm, issue or respond to breaking news or negative publicity, and discuss corporate, business-unit and department-specific activities and events. Franklin County must ensure that use of these communications maintains our brand identity, integrity and reputation while minimizing actual or potential legal risks, whether used inside or outside the workplace.

XII. Review of Rules and Guidelines

The following rules and guidelines apply to social networking and blogging when authorized by the employer and done on County time. The rules and guidelines apply to all employer-related blogs and social networking entries, including employer subsidiaries or affiliates.

- A. Only authorized employees can prepare and modify content for any Franklin County's blogs and/or the social networking entries authorized by the County. Content must be relevant, add value and meet at least one of the specified goals or purposes developed by Franklin County. If uncertain about any information, material or conversation, discuss the content with your manager.
- B. All employees must identify themselves as employees of Franklin County when posting comments or responses on the County's blogs or on the social networking sites.
- C. Any copyrighted information where written reprint permission has not been obtained in advance cannot be posted on Franklin County's blogs.
- D. Business units and departments are responsible for ensuring all blogging and social networking information complies with Franklin County's written policies as well as posting information that supports the County's Vision, Mission, Leadership Philosophy and Operating Principles. Business unit and department heads are authorized to remove any content that does not meet the rules and

guidelines of this policy or that may be illegal or offensive. Removal of such content will be done without permission of the blogger or advance warning.

If you have any questions relating to this policy, your personal blog or social networking, ask your manager or supervisor.