



COMMUNICATIONS PERSONNEL POLICY/PROCEDURE

Policy No. 7722 **Date Issued:** May 17, 2023

Section: 7000 - Miscellaneous **Date Revised:**

SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE EXPRESSION OF SPEECH

APPROVED: <signed copy on file>
Amethyst Uchida, General Manager

1.0 Purpose

This policy addresses issues associated with employee use of social networking sites and to provide guidelines for the regulation and balancing of employee speech and expression with the needs of the Authority.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit or infringe upon any communication, speech, or expression that is protected or privileged under law. This includes speech and expression under state or federal constitutions as well as labor or other applicable laws. For example, this policy does not limit an employee from speaking as a private citizen, including acting as an authorized member of a recognized bargaining unit or employee associations, about matters of public concern, such as misconduct or corruption. Employees are encouraged to consult with their supervisor regarding any questions arising from the application or potential application of this policy.

2.0 Employee Speech, Expression and Social Networking

Public employees occupy a trusted position in the community, and thus, their statements have the potential to contravene the policies and performance of this department. Due to the nature of the work and influence associated with the law enforcement profession, it is necessary that employees of this agency be subject to certain reasonable limitations of their speech and expression. To achieve its mission and efficiently provide service to the public, Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 will carefully balance the individual employee's rights against the Authority's needs and interests when exercising a reasonable degree of control over its employees' speech and expression.

This applies to all forms of communication including but not limited to:

- Film
- Video
- Print media
- Public or private speech
- Use of all internet services, including the World Wide Web, email, file transfer, remote computer access, news services, social networking, social media, instant messaging, blogs, forums, and other file-sharing sites.

Employees should carefully consider the implications of their speech or any other form of expression when using the internet. Speech and expression that may negatively affect the safety of SCR9-1-1 or their user agencies, such as posting personal information in a public forum, can result in compromising an employee's home address or family ties. Employees should therefore not disseminate or post any information on any forum or medium that could reasonably be anticipated to compromise the safety of any employee, an employee's family, or associates.

Examples of the type of information that could reasonably be expected to compromise safety include:

- Disclosing a photograph and name or address of an employee, or user agency
- Disclosing the address of a fellow employee or user agency
- Otherwise disclosing where another employee or user agency personnel can be located off-duty

3.0 Prohibited Speech, Expression, and Conduct

To meet the agency's safety, performance, and public-trust needs, the following are prohibited unless the speech is otherwise protected (for example, an employee speaking as a private citizen including acting as an authorized member of a recognized bargaining unit or employee associations on a matter of public concern):

- Speech or expression made pursuant to an official duty that tends to compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation, or professionalism of Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 or its employees.
- Speech or expression that, while not made pursuant to an official duty, is significantly linked to, or related to, Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 and tends to compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation or professionalism of Santa Cruz Regional 9-1-1 or its employees. Examples may include:
 - Statements that indicate disregard for the law or the state or U.S. Constitution.
 - Expression that demonstrates support for criminal activity or encourages violence.
 - Participating in sexually explicit photographs or videos for compensation or distribution.