

YAPHANK FIRE DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy:

The Yaphank Fire District acknowledges that use of technology by emergency service organizations provides several useful benefits including training and the acquisition of useful information for the betterment of the organization and its members. It also allows for the dissemination of information to the public for recruitment, safety education and public purposes. As such, the Yaphank Fire District embraces the usage of this new/instant technology to that end.

This policy establishes the Yaphank Fire District's social media and instant technology use procedures and protocols which are intended to mitigate associated risks from the use of this technology where possible.

This policy applies to all employees of the Yaphank Fire District, volunteer members of the Yaphank Fire Department, consultants and contractors performing business on behalf of the Yaphank Fire District.

For the purposes of this policy, the term instant technology is defined as resources including, but not limited to, instant messaging, texting, paging, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, My Space, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and any other information sharing services, websites and/or blogs.

All Department/District social media pages shall be approved by the Fire Chief/Board of Fire Commissioners or their designees. All social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations and policies including the records management and retention requirements set by law and regulation.

The internet and other information sharing devices are global entities with no control of users or content. Therefore, available resources may contain material of a controversial nature. The Yaphank Fire District is not responsible for the information found on these sources.

The Fire District understands the value of such technology, but also understands the concerns and issues raised when information is released that violates privacy concerns or portrays this organization to the public in an illegal or negative manner (intentional or unintentional). Therefore, no information, videos or pictures gathered while on Yaphank Fire District/Fire Department business (this includes emergency calls, meetings, drills,

details, trainings or anything obtained on organization property or at organization functions) may be shared or posted in any format without the approval and written consent of the Fire District's Public Information Officer.

Under this restriction, members and employees are prohibited from disseminating or transmitting in any fashion photographs or images of individuals receiving emergency medical assistance. Any such transmission may violate New York State Laws and/or the HIPPA privacy rights of such individuals and may result in a criminal and/or civil proceeding being commenced against members and employees violating this provision of the policy.

This policy is not intended to limit your right to freedom of speech or expression; but as we are a public entity, it has been put in place to protect the rights of this organization, its members and the public we are sworn to protect. Members and employees are advised that their speech directly or by means of instant technology either on or off duty and in the course of their official duties that has a connection to their professional duties and responsibilities may not be protected speech under the First Amendment. Speech that impairs or impedes the performance of the Fire Department/Fire District, undermines discipline and harmony among co-workers or negatively affects the public perception of the department/District may be sanctioned.

As a basic concept of the constitutional law, a public employee may comment on a matter of public concern. However, airing personal workplace grievances does not raise a matter to a level of public concern.

In that regard, members and employees must follow guidelines when discussing the Fire District/Fire Department on Social Media Websites:

- Do not make any disparaging or 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 that of the Fire District/Fire Department.
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information.
- Do not violate Fire District/Fire Department policies including the Code of Ethics.
- Do not display Department or District logos, uniforms or similar identifying items without prior written permission.
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer or employee of the Department or District without prior written permission.
- Do not post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause you to be identified as a firefighter, officer or employee of the Department or District on any online dating or similar sites.
- Do not publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the Department or District without authorization.

- Do not post pictures or comments that violate any Department/District rules and/or any state or federal laws.
- Consider the guidelines stated in the Department/District Policy which prohibits the commission of sexual harassment and discrimination against your fellow personnel when deciding to send any communications which include, pictures, comments and other forms of reference to the personnel you work or serve with and do not violate that rules and laws.
- Do not assume that the willingness of a fellow worker or volunteer who is the subject of an offensive or improper communication to accept and not complain about the communication prevents the communication from violating the rights of other workers and volunteers.
- Do not communicate pictures and/or personal information concerning a fellow employee or volunteer because placing this information into the public domain may subject them to harassment, stalking and other dangers.

The Yaphank Fire District owns the rights to all data and files in any owned computer, network, cell phone or other information system. The Yaphank Fire District also reserves the right to monitor electronic email messages (including personal/private/instant messaging systems) and their content, as well as any and all use of the internet and of computer equipment used to create, view or access e-mail and Internet content. Members and employees must be aware that the electronic messages sent and received using Yaphank Fire District equipment are not private and are subject to viewing, downloading, inspection, release, and archiving by District and Department Officers at all times. The Yaphank Fire District has the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the network or on individual computers or storage media in order to assure compliance with policy and state and federal laws.

Inappropriate use of the Internet and instant technology while on Yaphank Fire District/Fire Department business may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination as an employee of the Fire District or volunteer member of the Fire Department.

Yaphank Fire District/Department computer equipment is to be used for the fire district/department business and purposes in a professional and businesslike manner. This policy may not be applied in such a manner as to prohibit paid employees from engaging in "protected concerted activity". This policy will not be applied in a way that infringes on the rights of paid employees under the National Labor Relations Act. Paid employees are permitted to engage in discussions on issues related to the terms and conditions of their employment with fellow paid employees. Paid employees may enter into discussions on social media with other employees on topics such as wages, benefits, and working conditions without violating this policy. However, this protection does not relate to paid employees discussing personal gripes and grievances which do not relate to group activities of paid employees.

The adoption of this policy in the form of resolution was duly put to a vote and upon roll call the vote was as follows:

Chairman Skidmore	AYE
Commissioner Austin	AYE
Commissioner Peters	AYE
Commissioner Schaaf	NOT PRESENT
Commissioner Thebold	NOT PRESENT

The resolution was thereupon duly adopted.

Dated: December 19, 2018.

Re-adopted this 7th day of January 2025 by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Attest by:

Paulamarie Rosso-Thompson
District Secretary