

615 – SOCIAL MEDIA

**Section 615.01
Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to address the use of social media communications that Fort Bend County may utilize to reach a broader audience where appropriate and when approved by Commissioners Court. This policy will also address employee’s personal use of social media, both on and off duty.

**Section 615.02
Definitions**

Social media, for the purpose of this policy, refers to all means of communicating or posting information or content of any type on the Intranet or Internet. This includes but is not limited to a web log or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity web site (such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn), web bulletin boards, on-line chat rooms and other forms of social media which may become available.

**Section 615.03
Official Fort Bend
County Social Media
Presence**

All official Fort Bend County presences on social media venues are considered an extension of the County’s information and communications network. All County use of social media must be in compliance with this policy.

Department Heads and Elected Officials who wish to distribute information by social media should consult with the Information Technology Department prior to establishing any type of work-related on-line social media account or site to ensure that the activity is compatible with Fort Bend County electronic systems equipment and capabilities. Departments and offices must complete the attached Social Media Request Form detailing why the use of social media is necessary, the expected benefits, and what will deem its use successful. Departments and offices must also designate a custodian of the social media site who will, at a minimum:

- monitor the site to ensure all posted content is current, accurate and an appropriate representation of Fort Bend County
- immediately remove any inappropriate content
- ensure compliance with privacy and copyright laws

Wherever possible, County social media sites should use links to direct users back to the County’s official website for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Fort Bend County. County e-mail addresses, authorized in advance, should be used to create any social media account utilized for **official** County purposes.

**Section 615.04
Official
Statements/Press
Releases**

It is recommended that Department Heads and Elected Officials contact the Fort Bend County Public Information Officer in the County Judge’s Office for assistance with official statements and press releases. Under no circumstances should an employee represent themselves as an official spokesperson or representative of Fort Bend County or any County department or office without the express written approval of Commissioners Court or the subject office’s Elected Official. Unofficial statements posted on a personal social media venue are discouraged, and if made should include a disclaimer stating that the posting is not the official position or opinion of Fort Bend County.

**Section 615.05
Employee's Personal
Use of Social Media**

It is the policy of Fort Bend County that employees should refrain from accessing social media websites while on duty, and/or on County provided electronic equipment, except in limited situations where such activity is work related and is authorized by a Department Head or Elected Official. Unauthorized social media activity conducted while on-duty and/or on County provided electronic equipment could be a violation of *Section 604: Electronic Systems Policy and Guidelines*. Employees must not use their Fort Bend County e-mail address to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for **personal** purposes.

Fort Bend County recognizes that employees may choose to participate in social media activities when off-duty, and in no way seeks to limit an employee's use of social media on their own time. However, employees should ensure that their off-duty social media activity does not interfere with their work for Fort Bend County or with their workplace relationships. Employees should refrain from posting any information, rumors, gossip, photographs, video or audio of co-workers, clients, customers, and vendors of the County without the express permission of the other individual(s). Keep in mind that such activity, even if conducted while off duty, could affect the work environment and may be a violation of *Section 206: Workplace Harassment and Violence Protection Policy* or other Fort Bend County policies.

Information posted on social media sites can be accessed by a wide audience and the social media participant has limited ability to restrict access to such posts. It is reasonable to expect that one's social media postings may be viewed, copied, forwarded, printed or otherwise shared with multiple people, including Elected Officials, Department Heads and other employees of Fort Bend County. Employees are responsible for their own social media activity and are solely responsible for any liability created by posting any defamatory or libelous information about another individual or organization.

Employees are prohibited from disclosing any information on the Internet, Intranet or in any other manner obtained in the course of their employment that is confidential, personal or private, unless so required by state law or a court order. Violations of copyright laws and restrictions and privacy policies are prohibited. Questions regarding any disclosure should be directed to the County Attorney. Employees who violate any County policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

**Section 615.06
Employees Responsible
for Their Use of Social
Media**

Fort Bend County will take reasonable steps to ensure compliance with this policy and employees may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment for policy violation. Employees who have any questions about this policy, or are unsure about the content of a social media activity, should discuss their concerns with a Department Head, Elected Official or Human Resources.

Policy Approved and Adopted by
Fort Bend County Commissioners Court
September 14, 2010