



Anchorage
Police
Department
Employees
Association

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All APDEA Members:

As social networking Internet sites have increased in popularity, law enforcement employees have begun to use the sites to communicate with family and friends. As a result, law enforcement employers have begun to impose discipline on employees when employers believe that the postings on a site violate departmental rules. We've now had our first "Facebook cases" at APD.

To remind everyone, there is no particular constitutional protection associated with postings on a social networking site. This is particularly true if the employee is on duty. If information would be inappropriate for you to relate to a stranger or other non-Department employee in a casual conversation, it's just as inappropriate to post it on a social networking site or any other Internet page. For example, if you post confidential law enforcement information on a web page, the Department has the right to investigate whether the posting violates Department rules and, if it does, impose discipline. Serious breaches of Departmental policy can result in serious discipline.

Rest assured that the APDEA will continue to review all disciplinary action imposed by the Department, no matter what the charges are. If we think the discipline is inappropriate, we will challenge it. However, everyone should understand this basic principle about social networking sites and other web pages – if APD could discipline you for relating the information in a different way (face-to-face conversation, phone, letter, etc.), it can discipline you for posting the information on the Internet. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; be careful in your use of social networking sites.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Hsieh".

Derek Hsieh
President, APDEA

December 21st, 2009