INVESTIGATIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET SOURCES

605.1 POLICY

Use of social media and any other Internet source to access information for the purpose of criminal investigation shall comply with applicable laws, city’s internet use policy and policies regarding privacy, civil rights and civil liberties. The Pasadena Police Department will continually balance the use of investigative tools against concerns regarding unwarranted government surveillance. Information gathered via the Internet should only be accessed by members while on-duty and for purposes related to the mission of this department. If a member encounters information relevant to a criminal investigation while off-duty or while using his/her own equipment, the member should note the dates, times and locations of the information and report the discovery to his/her supervisor as soon as practicable. The member, or others who have been assigned to do so, should attempt to replicate the finding when on-duty and using department equipment.

Information obtained via the Internet should not be archived or stored in any manner other than department-established record keeping systems and shall be subject to the same records maintenance and retention policy as other investigatory material (see the Records Maintenance and Release and the Criminal Organizations policies).

605.2 ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Information that can be accessed from any department computer, without the need of an account, password, email address, alias or other identifier (unrestricted websites), may be accessed without supervisory approval and used for legitimate investigative purposes. Examples of the proper use are when data relates to a specific criminal investigation or department-related civil or administrative action.

Accessing information from any Internet source that requires the use or creation of an account, password, email address, alias or other identifier, or the use of nongovernment IP addresses, requires supervisor approval prior to access. The supervisor will review the justification for accessing the information and consult with legal counsel as necessary to identify any policy or legal restrictions. Any such access and the supervisor approval shall be documented in the related investigative report.
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Accessing information that requires the use of a third party’s account or online identifier requires supervisor approval and the consent of the third party. The consent must be voluntary and shall be documented in the related investigative report.

Information gathered from any Internet source should be evaluated for its validity, authenticity, accuracy and reliability. Corroborative evidence should be sought and documented in the related investigative report. Use of any subscription internet search tools shall be subject to periodic review.

Any information collected in furtherance of an investigation through an Internet source should be documented in the related report. Documentation should include the source of information and the dates and times that the information was gathered.

POLICY MODIFIED 11/17