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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

COMMISSIONER ADAM H. PUTNAM

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 4, 2014

TO: Forestry Staff

FROM: Jim Karels, Director

SUBJECT: Cell Phone & Social Media Policy Updates

Employees of the Florida Forest Service (FFS) are passionate about what we do on a daily basis and we believe in open communication. Whether you use Facebook, Twitter, blogs or some other form of online publishing or discussion, FFS encourages you to tell the world about your work and share information with others. That said, these new forms of communication are continually changing the way we talk to each other and the way we interact with the public and our partners.

In order to avoid any problems or misunderstandings, we have revised **Policy 225.011 Communication Requirements**. Read the attached policy closely and familiarize yourself with the changes.

Please remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on the internet. Even if you act with the best intentions, you must remember that anything you put out there about FFS could potentially harm the agency. Please act responsibly.

If you are even slightly unsure about something you wish to publish that is related to FFS, talk to your supervisor or the FFS Communications & Public Relations Coordinator, Chelsea Parker at Chelsea.Parker@FreshFromFlorida.com or (850) 681-5941.

225.011 Communication Requirements

The Florida Forest Service is an emergency response agency and responds to all types of incidents, including, but not limited to, fire, hurricanes, tornadoes and pest eradication. Therefore, it is imperative that the agency is able to communicate with all employees while either on or off duty.

FFS policy requires that all employees have either a home telephone (land line) or a cell phone where they may be reached for emergency response. This also assists management in accounting for all employees during a state or national emergency or disaster.

- Regarding the use of cell phones in the work environment:

  1. The Florida Forest Service recognizes that employees need to maintain communication capabilities with family, work and others during work hours and that cell phones have facilitated this need. However, the use of personal cell phones for calls, photography, video and texting should be managed by the individual to minimize distractions at work. In the event that the use of a personal cell phone is deemed a distraction at work, the supervisor will take corrective measures based on the situation as deemed appropriate. This may include asking the employee if he/she has an emergency that needs immediate attention or instructing the employee to wait until a break, lunch or a more appropriate time to use the phone.

  2. Examples of inappropriate cell phones usage includes but is not limited to personal, non-emergency use during operation of vehicles, aircraft and other FFS equipment, while carrying out fire suppression or prescribed fire operations, during emergency dispatching, or while engaged in any activity where a distraction could pose a safety hazard. During wildfire suppression and prescribed fire operations, FFS employees should only be focused on the work related task at hand. This will ensure that personnel are performing the task(s) safely and conducting all operations in the manner in which they have been instructed and/or trained. The use of cell phones or other types of recording equipment to record audio and/or video are not authorized while engaged in fire tactical operations as this can create a distraction and unsafe environment.

  3. The use of personal "Smart Phones" to access the internet for personal use is not prohibited. However, the employee should use good judgment when doing so to ensure that this activity does not negatively impact the work environment in any way and that inappropriate websites are not visited while on duty.

  4. Recording of sounds and images are allowed tactical fire operations, but it is the employee's responsibility to use such devices in a professional manner. Sounds and images captured on such devices, while on-duty, must always be presented to reflect a positive image of the Department.

- Regarding the personal use of Florida Forest Service related content on web-based public pages ("web-based public pages" refers to all social media, personal profiles, pages, groups, newsfeeds, timelines, accounts, blogs and websites):

  1. Employees are prohibited from the personal use of web-based public pages to post or display comments about coworkers, supervisors or the employer that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, intimidating, defamatory, discriminatory, unlawful or harassing.

  2. Photo, video, audio and/or the FFS logo should not be posted on any personal web-based public pages in any way that would lead the viewer to believe that the information is an approved release by the Department or the Florida Forest Service, unless specific prior approval has been given by the Director of the Florida Forest Service.

3. Any forestry or wildfire related personal web-based public pages created by FFS employees must visibly and permanently clarify that the employee(s) are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the agency.

4. Wildfire incident information of any kind or prescribed fire operations information should never be posted on any personal web-based public pages unless shared directly from a public news source, an official FFS release or an official FFS social media source.

5. If an employee posts personally taken/obtained photos, videos or audio of any FFS operation to any personal web-based public page, the Florida Forest Service reserves the right to use these photos for official purposes, as appropriate. The photographer/videographer will receive credit whenever possible.

6. The Florida Forest Service reserves the right to use photos, video or audio recordings of any on-duty FFS employees for official purposes. The posting of photos, videos, or audio recordings taken in the work environment without consent of the individuals for personal use is not authorized.

7. Photos, videos or audio recordings taken in the work environment that clearly identify (full face/front facing) children or minors should not be posted on personal or official outlets unless documented written consent is received from a legal guardian.