



Coquitlam Search & Rescue

Social Media Policy

Ref. #: 00011

Date Published: October 15, 2013

Policies & Procedures Manual

Intended Audience

While this policy is primarily intended as a guide for team members, it is being made available to the SAR community and the general public to promote transparency about what is expected of Coquitlam Search and Rescue (SAR) member behavior with respect to social media.

Purpose

This document defines our policy and procedures with relation to appropriate and acceptable use of social media, both within and outside the SAR environment, by Coquitlam SAR Members. This policy provides our members with best practice guidance for their own personal safe and responsible use of social media in relation to Coquitlam SAR.

We are eager to obtain the views of our members and other interested stakeholders in relation to the policy. As a society serving our local community, we consider our stakeholders during the development and ongoing refinement of all our policies and procedures.

Background

With the exponential growth in Internet usage, information sharing through social media has become common place. Social media tools have become synonymous with popular culture and have enabled instant communication among large groups of users. People of all ages, and organizations of all types and sizes are using these tools in manners never encountered before. Social media use by organizations can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing, community outreach and operational endeavors.

The increase in personal social media usage across demographics also means that more and more first responders are engaging in these tools on a personal level. Coquitlam SAR recognizes the role that social media may play in the personal lives of its members. The personal use of social media may have a bearing on Coquitlam SAR members in their official capacity and upon the image of Coquitlam SAR, the City of Coquitlam and the larger BC SAR Community. As such, this policy addresses specific personal social media uses and provides guidelines to assist members in protecting their personal and professional images.

Like all forms of communication, social media must be utilized in a clear and responsible manner to ensure that the clarity of the messaging is maintained, privacy (and respect) of the subject is maintained and to prevent misinterpretation and erroneous messaging from occurring.



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Definitions

In this policy, the following terms are defined as:

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments.

Member: Any member of Coquitlam SAR regardless of state (field active/non field active), and any SAR member tasked by Coquitlam SAR under a mutual aid agreement.

Page: The specific portion of a social media website that displays content, and is managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post: Content a user shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Profile: Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site.

Social Media: A category of Internet based resources that integrate user generated content and user participation/collaboration. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites such as Pinterest, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, Nixie, Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, Digg and personal/special interest blogs.

Social networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies and media.

Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, video, or related forms of communication.

Team: The Coquitlam Search and Rescue Association, a charitable non-profit association incorporated under the laws of British Columbia, Canada

Wiki: A Web site that is developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content.



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Use of Social Media by Coquitlam SAR

Social media has a place in emergency management and first response agencies, both operationally and to further the goals of the association.

Goals

The use of Social Media by our SAR team has several goals, in order of importance:

1. To notify the public of the activities of the team.
2. To assist the team and our tasking agencies to locate a missing person(s).
3. To promote important public safety messages
4. To foster relationships with other SAR teams and emergency services agencies
5. To promote the team and its position in the community.

General Principles

No use of social media should violate any laws, including Canadian and British Columbia privacy laws.

All information representing the team should come from easily identified "official" Coquitlam SAR accounts on each of the social media systems, and using Coquitlam SAR email addresses.

SAR members are allowed to post about their own experiences and opinions as long as they adhere to these guidelines and do not purport to represent the team in any way.

Guidelines

Task Related Usage

No member may release information via any channel during an active task for any purpose without the express approval of the SAR Manager in conjunction and with the tasking agency. This includes, radio, cell phones, social media, email, blog, or by in person conversations.

This directive is in line with Ground SAR and Team Leader training that all SAR members in BC receive; all responsibility for an ongoing task flows through the chain of command.

SAR members are free to comment on the weather conditions, terrain, difficulty of the task, and topics not related to tactics or strategy, all other questions should be referred to the command staff.



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No information, including images or likenesses of the subject(s) of a search, are to be released without a pressing public safety mandate, and then only by order of the tasking agency. Release of information about the subject of a search is only for the express purpose of locating a missing person, and then only when publication of such information is judged to be helpful by the command staff.

Examples of actions that are prohibited under this rule are

- Transmitting any images from an active task.
- Transmitting information, commentary, plans, or briefing notes
- Recording via video or audio any of the above without express permission.

The rationale for this directive is that SAR members may not be aware of all of the information pertaining to the ongoing task, and any release of information from the field can undermine continuing efforts by incident command, or be misinterpreted by the public.

All information *received* through the use of social media that pertains to an active task shall be forwarded to active SAR Manager for follow up as soon as possible.

Non-Task Related Usage

Images recorded during a SAR task can be used in limited circumstances as long as they adhere to the previously mentioned task-related usage, non-task usage and the guidelines following this section.

The following include but are not limited to non-task related use of social media:

- Community outreach and engagement including, but not limited to:
 - Providing backcountry tips or education (ie Hug-A-Tree, 10 Essentials, etc.)
 - Advertising team events or activities,
 - Thanking sponsors or supporters,
 - Request assistance from community (ie missing person or funding)
- Time-sensitive notifications or information on
 - Backcountry conditions,
 - Special events,
 - Weather emergencies,
 - SAR events.
- Interaction with other SAR agencies, teams and supporting groups to support the goals of SAR in BC, Canada and elsewhere.



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Coquitlam SAR will not use the likeness nor reveal any identifying information about any subject of a search or rescue in any way without full consent of said subject, unless, as previously mentioned, the subject's information is released by the tasking agency under a pressing public safety mandate.

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General Guidelines for Use

1. All Coquitlam SAR social media pages and posts shall clearly indicate they are the property of and maintained by Coquitlam SAR. Coquitlam SAR will brand the authenticity of this information with contact information prominently displayed or a link to that information being immediately obvious.
2. Social media content shall adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and policies from both Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) and the RCMP. Any conflict in policies (part or whole) will result in the EMBC or RCMP policy superseding this policy (in part or whole).
3. Social media content, where the public can add comment, shall state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Coquitlam Search & Rescue.
4. Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored, and that Coquitlam SAR reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and other inappropriate material. These are considered reasonable restrictions of free speech, and are not censorship by any definition.
5. Pages shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.
6. No member shall represent Coquitlam SAR in any social media format without the written authorization of the Coquitlam SAR Media Manager or President.
7. Representation of Coquitlam SAR's actions, activities or statements shall only occur through the official Coquitlam SAR social media outlets (listed below).
8. Coquitlam SAR members and their actions are to be depicted in a manner consistent with a safe and professional rescue team, and be respectful to the public and the subjects we rescue.
9. Where members are authorized to represent Coquitlam SAR through any media outlet(s), they shall:
 - Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of Coquitlam SAR and adhere to all Coquitlam SAR standards of conduct and professional behaviour;
 - Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media;
 - Identify themselves as a member of Coquitlam SAR;
 - Not make statements about their personal opinion regarding a task, subject, SAR team, governing body or related policies.
 - They shall not personally comment on active tasks, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information including photographs or videos, related to SAR training, activities, or related assignments.



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Examples

Command

Coquitlam SAR managers will post updates to social media when the team is called out on a search. If the tasking agency has a missing person and deems public disclosure to be necessary, Coquitlam SAR will retransmit a link to the tasking agency's postings, or in certain cases where updates to an ongoing search are important, to our own web site.

Members

SAR members should not be depicted behaving in an irreverent or unsafe manner while on a search. Photos of members "goofing off," laughing or in humorous situations should be properly identified as non-task related.

Equipment

We should not show images of worn or damaged equipment being used, or being used in a dangerous or unsafe manner. Images of worn or improperly used equipment should be properly captioned to convey the intent of the image, possibly for public education.

Captions

Pictures should be captioned to lend them context. Captions should also reflect our values of being a skilled and professional team. Captions can also make clear when an image is being used in a humorous context.

Public

Photos and media that contain images of members of the public where they are not the primary subject of the photo are not considered to infringe on the rights of the people in the photos.. It is assumed that if they are in a public place they have no reasonable expectation of privacy, and as long as they are not singled out or identified by name they can be background in any image.

On some searches, the public are present and now have the capability to record and transmit images, video, audio and text directly from the site of a rescue. If any member of the public is present we have to assume that they can record anything we say or do. They must be treated carefully since they do not always have the same code of conduct that a member of the media may have.

Blogging and Forum posting

Coquitlam SAR members are allowed to blog and post to online forums, social media, and other systems about their own thoughts, experiences, and opinions arising from their SAR activities as long as they adhere to the guidelines set in this document. Such blogging can be a very important form of public



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education, and allow SAR members to contribute to the SAR community as a whole. Coquitlam SAR is supportive of such efforts.

When commenting online about team related issues in a personal capacity, team members shall use their private (non-team) email address and identify themselves by name and ensure they are speaking for themselves and not as a representative of the team. Team name, logo, or branding will not appear in such private postings. No member speaking through private email accounts or non-official channels shall present themselves as a representative of the team.

All team members are expected to use common sense, caution and good judgment when participating in social media, for either official or personal usage.

It is highly recommended that opinions regarding active or past SAR incidents that involve safety, procedural or interpersonal conflicts be handled through systems in place to properly address the topic rather than by griping or complaining about them in a public forum. We seek to find solutions to such situations, and complaints in public do not serve this goal.

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Social Media Assets

What follows is a list of Coquitlam Search and Rescue social media accounts and systems, and their intended uses.

Team web site / Blog

<http://www.coquitlam-sar.bc.ca/>

The web site is used as the definitive site for the story about Coquitlam SAR, who we are, what we do and how the public can help, and learn to be safe in the outdoors. We post articles about the team, tasks, history, equipment, members, and how to join when we are recruiting. We also provide links on how to donate to the team, and include links to thank our sponsors and donors.

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/CoquitlamSAR>

Facebook is used to post links to articles on Coquitlam SAR's blog, photos with captions, updates on team activities, announcements, public safety updates, and to allow public contact with the team. The team will also re-post certain links from partner agencies and provincial and federal emergency management agencies.

Twitter

The team's Twitter account: <http://twitter.com/#!/coquitlamsar>

Twitter is used in an almost identical way to Facebook, but with shorter content, and often a more immediate response. In cases of urgent public notification, Twitter is used to alert local TV, Radio and print media of an ongoing incident.

YouTube

The team's YouTube account: <http://www.youtube.com/user/coquitlamsar>

Videos of the team in action are often posted to YouTube as the premiere video sharing service. These videos are then linked to the team's blog, and also sent out via social media. Videos are usually for the purpose of promoting the team's activities, informing the public of the SAR team's role in public safety, and for fundraising efforts.

Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/coquitlamsar/>



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Flickr is the premiere photo sharing service on the internet. High quality, high resolution and suitably watermarked images of the team, its members and its equipment in action are released on this site for the similar purposes of YouTube videos; to promote the team, to educate and to provide a source of imagery for print media to use.

Google+

Google plus is a new social media platform and Coquitlam SAR has an account there in order to share similarly to Facebook

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social media platform for business contact management. Coquitlam SAR has an entry in LinkedIn that is used by many members to link their volunteer positions on the team to their profiles on the system. Coquitlam SAR is an important part of people's lives, both as a charity they support and a volunteer position, maintaining an account on LinkedIn allows the team to officially recognize SAR member's contributions.

CanadaHelps.org

The team's primary online donation portal is CanadaHelps.org. While not necessarily a social media platform, it is an online system that identifies the team as a charitable organization and contains information about the team's activities and role in the community.

Other accounts

Other accounts can be created as systems evolve. The Technology Committee is responsible for the creation and maintenance of these accounts. Accounts will be created to fit similar purposes as outline in the goals section of this document.



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Michael Coyle, Technology Chair

Revision 2: August 2012
Robert Sell, Technology Chair

Revision 3: October, 2013
Michael Coyle, SAR Management Chair
Robert Sell, Technology Chair

Approved:

Team Leader

Deputy Team Leader

Search and Rescue Mangers Committee