

# **PRIVACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**of the Benevolent and Protective  
ORDER OF ELKS  
of the United States of America**



Effective July, 2022

# PRIVACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The Elks makes no representations that it will actively attempt to police this Policy but any violations of it that are brought to the attention of proper authority, and through proper procedures, may be addressed in accord with the disciplinary rules and regulations of the Grand Lodge Statutes.

## PURPOSE

E-mail, social media and other online communication systems are vital tools in our fast-moving tech-savvy world. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America (the “Elks”) has developed the following policy for our Members and their respective Lodges, District Associations, State Associations, Committees and State Major Projects and other Charitable Commissions to ensure they are using social media in a way that is safe, effective and consistent with their Oath of Obligation and the Elk’s ideals, goals and policies (“Policy”). Compliance with this Policy is required to insure adherence to the Rules and Regulations of the Order.

The Elks stand for the principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity and those principles are the driving force behind this Policy. This Policy is necessary to protect the rights of our Members, Lodges, District Associations, State Associations, Committees and State Major Projects and other Charitable Commissions and the privacy rights of those in the communities they serve. Failure to follow this Policy, in a manner that is harmful or detrimental, may subject a Member to disciplinary action under the Laws of the Order and may create potential legal consequences for themselves, their Lodges or the Order.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

The Elks are known throughout our great nation and are easy to identify with. All of us are very passionate about what we do on behalf of our Order. As Members we are encouraged to tell everyone about all the great reasons to be an Elk and to let them know what we are doing to make our local communities a better place.

With this in mind you must understand that you are personally responsible for the content you publish in E-mails and on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Tik Tok, YouTube, Pinterest wikis or any other form of user-generated media. Please remember that internet platforms never forget. This means everything you publish will be visible to the world forever. Common sense is a huge factor here. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review it multiple times and if still in doubt, discuss with proper authority within the Elks before posting. Always bear in mind these general thoughts:

- Respect everyone.
- Don't use ethnic slurs, sexual innuendo, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be becoming of an Elk.
- Never disclose any private or confidential matters concerning the Elks on a platform shared by non-members.
- You must also always show proper consideration for the privacy rights of others. Don't cite or reference Members, their families or guests, or those receiving aid or recognition from the Elks without their approval.
- And always be aware that others will associate you with the Elks when you identify yourself as an Elk.

Above all remember this Policy is not a stand-alone policy. It is subject to and supplements the Grand Lodge Constitution and Statutes, and the By-Laws and regulations of your Lodge and District and State Associations. Other policies and manuals, such as the Emblem Usage Guidelines, may need to be separately consulted on specific issues.

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## E-MAIL POLICY

### Overview:

Most of us have E-mail accounts tied to our phones and always have access to it. This makes it a common and often effective way to reach many people in a short period of time. However, not all E-mail accounts are secure and special precaution must be made to insure that access to private matters of the Order or personal details regarding our Members and those seeking aid from the Order are not inadvertently leaked to non-members. Also, when using an E-mail account that is linked to your Lodge or a District or State Association, Committee or Commission web page, you must also remember that in the eyes of the person sending or receiving E-mails to or from that account you are seen as an authorized agent of the Elks and must conduct yourself accordingly. There may be times and instances where use of the text message system on your personal phone creates a more secure and preferred method for communication. For these reasons, the following policies apply:

### Personal and Corporate E-mail Accounts:

1. Employers have access to all E-mail accounts sponsored on the employer's server or on equipment provided by the employer. For that reason, no discussions of a sensitive nature or that pertain to confidential matters of the Order should be conducted through employer sponsored E-mail accounts.
2. Persons who engage in confidential discussions involving concerns of their Lodge or the Order are encouraged to open a separate, dedicated E-mail account for that purpose only, to insure complete confidentiality.
3. It is advisable to establish group text message accounts rather than group E-mail accounts, for communications between Members of a Committee or Officers of a Lodge, to protect against inadvertent disclosure of E-mail history to an employer or person who is not an Elk that may have shared access to the computer or E-mail account.
4. Remember, E-mail history is always retrievable, even after the message is deleted. Never send an E-mail regarding a topic that you would not want to have disclosed in a court of law before a judge or jury.
5. Be extra careful in group E-mail settings not to hit "Reply All" in error when your message is intended to be received by fewer than all of the persons on the E-mail group.

**Elks' E-mail Accounts:**

1. In this context, the phrase “Elk’s E-mail Accounts” is intended to refer to accounts held by Lodges, Districts, State Association, Committees, Commissions and similar organizations existing under the Elk’s umbrella.
2. All communications coming into these accounts must be monitored regularly to insure that timely responses are made to inquiries whether from Members or person outside of the Order seeking information or assistance from the Order. A failure to do so reflects poorly on the Order.
3. The utmost courtesy and decorum must always be used when communicating through an Elk’s account, even if the person on the other end of the communication is communicating in an adversarial or unprofessional way.
4. Be diligent in proof reading your E-mails to insure proper spelling, grammar and content.
5. “Phishing” attacks and fraudulent efforts to gain access to an account to either steal information or release a virus have become common. As the user of an Elk’s E-mail account you are a “Guardian” of the Order. Do not open any suspicious looking E-mails or attachments from persons unknown to you. Signs to look for include:
  - E-mails that are not properly addressed to you or the branch of the Order the account is named in favor of.
  - E-mails that contain spelling and grammatical errors or that make unrealistic promises of financial gain for you or your organization.
  - E-mails that purport to have been sent by someone in your address book but are out of character for how that person would communicate with you.
  - E-mails that invite you to click on links without the ordinary amount of discussion regarding the link that one would expect. (“Here, I thought you might be interested in this” without a description of what “this” is).
  - E-mails that contain zip file attachments from a source that is either unknown to you or if known to you, that you were not expecting (contact that person before you open the link).
  - E-mails from return addresses that seem inconsistent with the message contained in the E-mail.
6. Always refrain from discussing private or confidential matters of the Order with non-members.
7. Only speak to topics which are related to your role in the Order or that you have authority to speak on (Example: A Lodge Secretary should not offer an opinion on a topic that falls within the specific authority of the ER, Trustees, Board of Directors, Treasurer, or Managing Body).



## LODGE BULLETIN BOARD POLICY

### Overview:

Lodges are often thought of as our “private” sanctuaries. However, this is not always the case. Members often bring guests into the Lodges who are non-members and who are not privy to matters of private concern to the Lodge, its Members or the Order. A fine line may exist between providing essential information to our Members and inadvertently disclosing privileged information to non-members. To safeguard against violations of our oath of confidentiality to the Order, the following policies apply:

1. Never post private information related to the happenings that occurred at Lodge Meeting, such as minutes, financial reports or committee reports. By way of example: announcing the Lodge passed a Motion to sponsor an event is acceptable, posting the names of the persons who proposed the event or seconded the Motion or the names of those who opposed the motion is not.
2. Never post photos or other information related to a person requesting or receiving aid without the permission of such person or their parent or legal guardian.
3. No photos of a Member or guests should be posted without such person’s permission or the permission of their parent or legal guardian if the guest is a minor or incapacitated person.
4. No advertising of goods or services by a Member should be posted that identifies the person as a Member of the Lodge or Order. (So long as other advertising is allowed and reference to membership status is not used, a Member may advertise the same as a non-member).
5. All postings must be in conformance with the House Rules. When in doubt, request permission of the Managing Body.

## LODGE NEWSLETTER POLICY

### Overview:

Many of the policies regarding Lodge Bulletin Boards apply equally (or with greater force) to Lodge Newsletters and are duplicated below as a reminder. However we must keep in mind the ability of non-members to gain access to Lodge Newsletters is somewhat greater than for the same non-members to gain access to a bulletin board maintained in the Lodge, for that reason special precautions are necessary.

1. Never publish private information related to the happenings that occurred at Lodge Meeting, such as minutes, financial reports or committee reports.
2. Never publish photos or other information related to person requesting or receiving aid without the permission of such person or their parent or legal guardian.
3. No photos of a Member or guests should be published without such person's permission or the permission of their parent or legal guardian if the guest is a minor or incapacitated person.
4. No advertising of goods or services by a Member should be published that identifies the person as a Member of the Lodge or Order. (So long as other advertising is allowed and reference to membership status is not used, a Member may advertise the same as a non-member).
5. All activities that are intended for "Members" or "Members and guests" only should be clearly identified as such to avoid confusion if a member of the general public becomes aware of it.
6. Do not publish any materials which contain the trademark protected information of third parties without their written consent. For example, this may include copying the likeness of a band that is hired for an upcoming party from its web page and publishing it to advertise the party without the band's permission to do so.
7. Keep in mind our Lodges are tax exempt nonprofit entities. Do not publish any materials that clearly indicate a "for profit" motive that is not exempt from unrelated business income treatment (UBIT). When in doubt of the UBIT status of an event, seek guidance from your Lodge accountant or other informed source before publication.

## FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Like E-mail accounts, Facebook, Twitter and other Social Media accounts create a permanent record even after materials are deleted. Courts are increasingly allowing for the discovery of materials posted on such accounts as evidence in cases relating to discrimination, defamation of character and other similar civil legal proceedings that can result in heavy financial penalties. They also reach an extremely broad audience, and each reader has his or her own standards regarding whether the line of offensiveness has been crossed, so use the utmost caution and discretion when posting. Liquor control commissions, Gaming Commissions and taxing authorities are known to prowl these social media accounts of fraternal groups looking for violations. Above all, social media outlets should never be used to discuss confidential matter of your Lodge or the Order, or to air personal grievances against fellow Members of the Officers of your Lodge or Members of other Elk entities. This is a violation of your obligation to never disclose the confidential matters of the Order and to protect the good names of our Members and their families.

### **Personal Accounts:**

1. Never post any confidential matters of the Elks in general or your Lodge in particular, including without limitation posting on a friend's Facebook page an announcement of confidential discussions or disputes that took place at a Lodge meeting.
2. Do not advertise a fund raiser that includes any personal information regarding the intended beneficiary of the fund raiser without his or her specific written permission.
3. Never post an event that involves gambling of any type (including raffles) unless you have a special license issued by the state to conduct the event.
4. Never post an event as being "open to the public" where alcohol is being served unless you are licensed to sell alcohol to the general public.
5. Do not advertise your status as a Member of the Elks in a manner designed to support a business or political candidate or issue.
6. Do not insult any Member or engage in a war of words against a Member on any social media outlet. It could result in possible charges for conduct unbecoming an Elk, and create a negative image of the Elks in general.
7. Feel free to post how much you enjoyed an event at the Elks or about your positive, non-confidential, experiences as an Elk. Be proud of who we are and what we stand for!

**Elks' Social Media Accounts:**

1. In this context the phrase “Elk’s Social Media Accounts” is intended to refer to accounts held in the name of Lodges, Districts, State Association, Committees, Commissions and similar organizations existing under the Elk’s umbrella.
2. All communications coming into these accounts must be monitored regularly to insure that timely responses are made to inquiries whether from Members or person outside of the Order seeking information or assistance from the Order. A failure to do so reflects poorly on the Order.
3. The utmost courtesy and decorum must always be used when communicating through an Elk’s account, even if the person on the other end of the communication is communicating in an adversarial or unprofessional way.
4. Be diligent in proof reading your posting to insure proper spelling, grammar and content. The utmost professionalism is expected when you are representing the Order.
5. When at all possible establish areas on the account pages with limited access to “Members Only” to allow broad based communication with your Members that comes at little to no cost to the Lodge or Elks Organization. This should be designed to coincide with a Member’s log-in credentials on the Grand Lodge site so that access is timely denied to Members who leave the Order.
6. Always refrain from posting private matters of the Order on non-private areas of social media accounts or social media accounts that do not have a password protected area for Members only.
7. Only post to topics which are related to your role in the Order or that you have authority to speak on. Don’t make any general representations about the Order without proper authority to do so. When in doubt, check first with your District Deputy or Area Member of the Committee on Judiciary.
8. Never publish information related to the happenings that occurred at Lodge Meeting, such as minutes, motions and voting results, financial reports or committee reports.
9. Never publish photos or other information related to person requesting or receiving aid without the written permission of such person or their parent or legal guardian.

10. No photos of a Member or guests should be published without such person's permission or the permission of their parent or legal guardian if the guest is a minor or incapacitated person.
  11. All activities that are intended for "Members" or "Members and guests" only should be clearly identified as such to avoid confusion if a member of the general public becomes aware of it.
  12. Do not publish any materials which contain the trademark protected information of third parties without their written consent. Always insure any use of the Elks' emblems are in strict accordance with the Emblem Usage Manual
  13. Keep in mind our Lodges are tax exempt nonprofit entities. Do not publish any materials that clearly indicate a "for profit" motive that is not exempt from unrelated business income treatment (UBIT). If you have any questions regarding UBIT, consult the tax preparer for the Lodge.
  14. At all times refrain from posting any materials that are insulting, defamatory, discriminatory, or that could in any way have the Elks (or any of its Members) viewed in a negative light or bring the risk of liability against the Elks, any subsection of the Elks, or its Members, under its umbrella.
  15. Do actively use social media to publicize community events, report on the success of your activities and community service, to recognize and honor our veterans and our great nation, and to encourage like-minded readers to want to find out about all of the great things they are missing out on until they become an Elk.
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## CONCLUSION

Given the broad base of issues that fall under this Policy, and the ever changing technology that is developing in the world around us, it is impossible to specifically address all situations to which this Policy is intended to apply. New social media platforms may arise that are not addressed herein but to which it is still expected that the principles and guidelines stated in this Policy are intended to apply. In all such matters govern your activities with these primary thoughts in mind:

- Be respectful to others.
- Always maintain and protect the confidentiality of the Order and the privacy of those asking or receiving aid from the Order.
- Always protect the good names of our Members and their families.
- Always assume that the last person that you want to read a posting, will have access to the posting and will read it.
- Use social media as a means to spread the message of Elkdom.

If after considering these primary concerns you are still in doubt, seek the guidance from those in the Order who have the qualifications and authority to direct you in your actions.

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