Jefferson Search and Rescue Online Media Policy

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Purpose

This document defines appropriate and acceptable use of online media, both within and outside the SAR environment, by JSAR members representing the organization to a public audience. This is detailed in the section entitled "Use of Online Media by JSAR."

The policy also provides members guidance for responsible personal use of online media in relation to JSAR activities. This guidance is found in the section entitled "JSAR-related Use of Online Media by Members."

While the focus of this policy is on Online Media because it is the most public example of communication in which the probability of information being inappropriately released, the principles herein may be taken to apply to other forms of media, including interviews with representatives of traditional media outlets and publishing articles, blogs or books.

Definitions

JSAR or hereinafter the "organization" – Jefferson Search and Rescue

Member – Any member of JSAR

Mission – Any task in which JSAR is participating at the direction of a Tasking Agency; this does not include Training Missions

Online Media – Social Media as well as traditional websites and similar forms of online communication, collaboration and publicity

Page – The portion of a social-media website that displays content to others and is managed by an individual or by individuals with administrator rights to do so

Post – An individual piece of content a user shares through Online Media or a comment a user shares through Online Media about an existing Post; also, the act of sharing such content

Profile – The information an individual provides about themselves on a Social Media site

Social Media – An internet site that primarily provides a conduit for publishing user-generated content and encourages user participation and collaboration (some examples are sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube and Instagram)

Tasking Agency – The public-safety agency, generally Jefferson County Sheriff's Office but at times another federal, state or local agency, at whose direction JSAR is assigned to a Mission.

Use of Online Media by JSAR

Goals of JSAR Online Media Use

The use of Online Media by JSAR has several goals, roughly listed here in order of importance:

1. To promote important public-safety messages;
2. To assist the organization in locating missing persons;
3. To make the organization accessible to interested prospective volunteers;
4. To notify the public of the activities of the organization;
5. To promote the organization and its position in the community; and
6. To foster relationships with other SAR teams and related agencies.

General JSAR Online Media Principles

No use of Online Media shall violate any federal, state or local law, including notably privacy laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Use of Online Media shall be led by an appointed JSAR Public Information Officer reporting to the JSAR Board and the JSAR voting membership.

All information posted by JSAR in Online Media shall be easily identified as official JSAR content by using clearly designated JSAR accounts and using JSAR email addresses. All websites and Social Media pages managed by JSAR shall clearly indicate that they are controlled by JSAR. Official contact information and a link to the primary JSAR website shall by prominently displayed on every such page or site.

JSAR members, JSAR equipment and JSAR actions shall be depicted in a manner consistent with safe and professional search-and-rescue operations. 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.

Where members are authorized to represent JSAR through any Online Media they shall:

- Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of JSAR and adhere to all JSAR standards of conduct and professional behavior;
- Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media;
- Identify themselves as a member of JSAR;
- Not make statements about their personal opinion regarding a task, subject, SAR team, governing body or related policies; and
- 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.

Comments by the Public

Pages where Posts, including comments, can be added by users other than JSAR administrators, shall state the following:

1. Opinions expressed by visitors to the page do not necessarily reflect the opinions of JSAR;
2. Posted comments will be monitored subject to JSAR administrators' availability to do so; and

3. JSAR reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, personal information, speculation regarding ongoing Missions, details of Missions that have not been released by the Tasking Agency responsible for such release and any other inappropriate material.

JSAR Online Media administrators should make use of one or more of the following statements to explain removed posts and to respond to requests for details or speculation about details of a Mission:

- "JSAR posts only summary information about its missions and leaves decisions about releasing details of a mission to our tasking agency. We cannot comment further."
- "Comments that include personal information, speculation or details regarding SAR missions that have not been released by our tasking agency will be removed if noted by page administrators."

Mission-related JSAR Use of Online Media

Information must be controlled by the Tasking Agency

Every JSAR Mission is performed at the direction of an agency with responsibility for directing or performing the Mission. To be clear, JSAR is without exception working at the behest of another agency, generally Jefferson County Sheriff's Office but at times another federal, state or local agency. That Tasking Agency has full control over the release of Mission-related information to the public. JSAR's first and most essential task in its use of Online Media related to a Mission is to follow the direction of the Tasking Agency. JSAR staff may not be aware of all of the information pertaining to the ongoing Mission, and any release of information from JSAR can undermine efforts by the Tasking Agency to prosecute the Mission.

Including subjects and other members of the public

JSAR 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 the subject's information is released by the Tasking Agency under a pressing public-safety mandate.

JSAR will not speculate about the cause of any subject's injury or loss of direction and will not include in Posts anything negative about a subject's behavior.

No information, including images or likenesses of the subject 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 Tasking Agency.

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.

Use of Tasking Agency Posts

When possible, JSAR shall share or repost a Mission-related Post by our Tasking Agency rather than creating one of our own. This keeps the burden of making an appropriate Post off JSAR and on the Tasking Agency and allows the Tasking Agency to update the Post as needed.

When there is a need to create a Post about JSAR's response to a Mission, Online Media administrators should start with the following template:

> "JSAR was called by [JCSO OR OTHER TASKING AGENCY] around [APPROXIMATE TIME] on [DAY AND DATE] for a [NATURE OF CALL] [AT/ON] [TRAIL OR OTHER LOCATION]. [NAME DROP OTHER SAR UNITS AND AGENCIES ON THE CALL] also responded.
>
> The subject was [LOCATED OR OTHER DISPOSITION] following [BASIC DESCRIPTION OF TASKINGS] by [QUANTITY OF JSAR RESPONDERS] JSAR personnel."

This template is intended only to show the level of detail desirable for a Mission-related Post. It should be modified as necessary for readability and to convey to the public an accurate but basic picture of what JSAR did on the Mission.

One or more pictures that adhere to the above guidelines should be included with each post if possible to aid in attracting attention, increasing the public-outreach benefit of the Post.

Each such Post shall be forwarded to JSAR's primary liaison with the Tasking Agency for the Mission in question to inquire about any Tasking Agency concerns before it is posted.

Non-Mission-related JSAR Use of Online Media

The following are examples of non-mission-related JSAR use of Online Media:

- Community outreach and engagement including, but not limited to:
    - Providing backcountry tips or education,
    - Advertising organization events or activities,
    - Thanking sponsors or supporters, and
    - Request assistance from community with missing person or funding;
- Time-sensitive notifications or information on
    - Backcountry conditions,
    - Special events,
    - Weather emergencies, and
    - SAR events; and
- Interaction with other SAR agencies, teams and supporting groups to support the SAR community.

Images used in non-mission-related Posts should generally be sourced during training missions. Images recorded during a Mission can be used in limited circumstances as long as they adhere to the above guidelines.

Even in later, public-education-related Posts, JSAR will not speculate about the cause of any subject's injury or loss of direction and will not include anything negative about a subject's behavior. Public-education-related Posts should be positive and highlight good practices rather than focusing on poor choices.

Current JSAR Online Media Assets

JSAR currently maintains the following Online Media Assets:

- Website at www.jsar-wa.org (primary public presence and source of information)
- Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/JSARWA (primary Social Media presence)
- Facebook Group at www.facebook.com/groups/jsar.wa (private group for Members only)
- Organization page at www.linkedin.com/company/jsar (allows current and past Members to identify publicly with the organization)

Additional Online Media assets may be developed as judged appropriate by the Public Information Officer and the Board to further the goals listed above for the use of Online Media by JSAR. For similar reasons, existing assets may be depreciated, removed from public view or deleted from servers; but in such cases reasonable efforts should be made to archive Posts and other data from such assets for historical organizational purposes.

JSAR-related Use of Online Media by Members

General Principles for Members' Use of Online Media

Considerate, personal use of Online Media by Members can be a very important form of public education and allow Members to contribute personally to the wider SAR community and to hiking and climbing communities. JSAR is supportive of such efforts and expects Members to use common sense, caution and good judgment when participating in Online Media, for either official or personal usage.

Members' Mission-related Use of Online Media

No release of information from an active Mission

No member may release information via any channel during an active Mission for any purpose without the express approval of the JSAR operations leader and public-information officer in conjunction with the Tasking Agency. This includes releases via Online Media and any other route of communication. Members must remember that they are not aware of all of the information pertaining to the ongoing Mission, and any release of information from a Member can undermine efforts by the Tasking Agency to prosecute the Mission.

Examples of actions that are prohibited are the following:

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

Receiving information regarding an active Mission

Any information *received* by a Member through the use of Online Media or other route that pertains to an active task shall be forwarded to Tasking Agency for follow up as soon as possible.

Later Posts about a Mission

Images recorded during a Mission and the Member's personal comments on the weather conditions, terrain, difficulty of the task and other topics not related to tactics or strategy may be used in Online Media Posts in limited circumstances. Such Posts shall be separated by a reasonable period of time from the Mission and shall err on the side of caution with regard to showing or describing details related to the subject(s) of the Mission. Such Posts shall 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.

Use of JSAR or Tasking Agency Posts

When possible, Members are encouraged to share or repost a Mission-related Post by JSAR or by our Tasking Agency rather than creating one of their own. This keeps the burden of making an appropriate Post off the Member and on JSAR or the Tasking Agency and allows JSAR or the Tasking Agency to update the Post as needed.

Members' Non-Mission-related Use of Online Media

Members are allowed to post to Online Media about their own thoughts, experiences, and opinions arising from their SAR activities as long as they adhere to the guidelines set in this document.

When posting in Online Media about JSAR-related issues in a personal capacity, Members shall use their private (non-JSAR) email address and identify themselves by name and ensure they are speaking for themselves and not as a representative of the organization. JSAR's name and its logo shall not appear in such private postings. No Member speaking through private email accounts or non-official channels shall present themselves as a representing the organization.

It is highly recommended that opinions regarding active or past Missions that involve safety, procedural or interpersonal conflicts be handled through the JSAR board, membership and existing policies to properly address the topic rather than by raising them via Online Media. We seek to find solutions to such situations, and complaints in public do not generally serve this goal well.