

# Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Social Media Comment Policy and Terms of Use

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office Social Media Comment Policy and Terms of Use is to provide the standards and procedures for the appropriate use of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media platforms. This policy creates guidelines for any public user who accesses or posts any content on the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office's social media platforms. This policy applies to any and all social media platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Nextdoor, or Nixle. The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office recognizes that social media continues to evolve and that new platforms may become available thereby requiring a revision of the current policies.

## COMMENT POLICY

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office encourages public interaction on social media with the following caveats:

- **Stay focused.** All viewpoints are welcome, but comments should remain relevant to the topic of discussion, community outreach efforts, public information, and the associated website.
- **Tell the truth.** Spreading misleading or false information is prohibited.
- **No spam.** Repeated posting of identical or very similar content in a counter-productive manner is prohibited – this includes posts aggressively promoting services or products.
- **Public record.** Any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure and may be archived by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office even if the content is deleted from public view.

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office recognizes that the web is a 24/7 medium, and your comments are welcome at any time. However, moderating of comments should only be expected to occur during regular business hours.

## TERMS OF USE

By posting or commenting on any of Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media platform, you are participating by your own free will, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information you provide therein. You further agree to the following terms of use:

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office maintains a social media program for the purpose of engaging and interacting with our community, providing relevant and timely community news, information and events, distribution of crime prevention and public safety tips, for urgent notifications of critical incidents which may affect residents, business owners and visitors of Beaufort County, and for those people having an interest in the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office.

### LIMITED PUBLIC FORUM

All social media platforms used by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office are designated as Limited Public Forums. The Sheriff's Office welcomes a person's right to express his/her opinion and encourages posters to keep comments relevant to the topic in question. Posting of any content on any social media platform used by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, by any visitor, follower, subscriber, or fan, constitutes acceptance of the terms of use described here in this policy.

### EMERGENCY OR NON-EMERGENCY REQUESTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

The posting of requests for law enforcement assistance, regardless of an emergency or non-emergency nature, is discouraged and will not guarantee a response by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office or any emergency service provider. In case of an emergency, or to report a crime, please call 9-1-1. If you wish to report information relevant to a crime, please call the non-emergency number at 843-524-2777 or Crime Stoppers of the Lowcountry at 843-554-1111.

### **ENDORSEMENTS AND DIRECT LINKS**

"Friending", "Following" or "Liking" of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, or an employee of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, does not indicate an endorsement of that person's actions or comments.

A comment or post by a member of the public on any Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media platform is the opinion of the author only, and publication of a post or comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office's.

The provision of direct links should not be construed as an endorsement or sponsorship of these external sites, their content, or their hosts. The views and opinions of the authors of documents published on or linked to the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media accounts do not necessarily state or reflect the opinion, policy, or position of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office.

The Beaufort County Sheriff's Office is not responsible or liable for the content, quality, accuracy, or completeness of any offsite materials referenced by or linked through the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media accounts. By using the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social networking sites, the user acknowledges and accepts the risk of injury or damage from viewing, hearing, downloading, or storing such materials rests entirely with the user and the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office is not responsible for any material stored on other social networking sites or websites, nor is it liable for any inaccurate, defamatory, offensive, or illegal materials found on other social networking sites or websites.

### **MODERATION OF CONTENT:**

When applicable, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office uses platform-provided content moderation/filtering options to limit foul or obscene content. Social media platforms used by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office are only monitored during regular business hours and content posted will not be reviewed until the following business day. Content that violates the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office social media policy may be subject to removal. This removable material may include, but is not limited to:

- Comments not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments
- Profane, obscene, or sexually explicit content and/or language
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, or national origin
- Defamatory or information asserted as fact for which the poster does not have a reasonable basis to believe is accurate
- Threats to any person or organization
- Political campaigning
- Conduct in violation of any federal, state, or local law

- Solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale or other personal uses
- Encouragement of illegal activity or violence
- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party
- Posts or comments which contain external links
- Apparent spam or content posted by automatic software programs (i.e., “bots”)

Any content deemed to be in violation of its social media policy may be subject to removal by the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office. Continued or egregious violation of the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office social media policy may result in a further restriction of an individual’s ability to comment. The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office reserves the right to remove any and all comments it deems inappropriate regardless of the specified list above.

### **DISCLOSURE**

Please be aware that you participate at your own risk and assume personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided. Nothing in this policy shall be applied to prohibit or infringe upon any communication, speech or expression that is protected or privileged under law. This includes speech and expression protected under state or federal constitutions, as well as other applicable laws. Any content removed based on these guidelines may be retained by the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office for a reasonable period, including the time, date, and identity of the person making the comment.

### **LIABILITY**

The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office expressly disclaims liability for any viruses or other contamination of a user’s computer system or other devices used to access Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office’s social media platforms. The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office does not guarantee or warrant that any information posted by users on this site is correct. The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office disclaims any responsibility or liability for any misstatement and/or misunderstanding on the users’ part. The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office expressly disclaims liability for actions or decisions taken or not taken based on any or all contents of its social media sites. The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office disclaims any liability whatsoever for any loss (directly or indirectly) or damage resulting from reliance on such information.

The Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office reserves the right to amend any of the provisions of this policy for any reason and at any time. Should you have any questions regarding items contained herein this Terms of Use, please contact the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office’s Public Information Officer at 843-255-3200.