

PLAINSBORO TOWNSHIP BOARD of FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FIRE DISTRICT No. 1
VIDEO and PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

PURPOSE:

To establish a policy regarding the release of information to the public by members of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or employees of the Plainsboro Fire District No. 1, including but not limited to verbal comments or photographs or any type of electronic images obtained in the performance of their duties, or while on duty. In addition, this guideline will establish policy with respect to the posting of images or descriptions of Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 activities on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or the internet in general.

This policy is designed to ensure that members of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or employees of the Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 protect the privacy of patients, fire or medical victims, and the public we serve.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all members of Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and employees of the Plainsboro Fire District No. 1.

Members of Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and employees of Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 have access to information and work in locations beyond that of members of the general public. Comments made by members of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or employees of Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 may also be construed as being made in some official capacity. For these reasons, Plainsboro Fire District can and must exercise control over member's/employees public statements, online postings and other internet activities and actions in order to ensure efficient provision of public service.

PROCEDURES:

1. Requests for information regarding any emergency or non-emergency department activity must be referred to the Officer in Charge (OIC) or the Public Information Officer (PIO). These include questions from family, business employees, victims of incidents, the media, neighbors, and members/employees of other public safety organizations.
2. As a member of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 or an employee of Plainsboro Fire District No. 1, Plainsboro Fire personnel may learn facts or information related to an incident or to Fire Company/Fire District operations that should be considered confidential. This information should not be shared with the general public, posted online in social media or any other internet forum, or be distributed via e-mail.

3. Under no circumstances will members of Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 or employees of Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 be permitted to use a personal camera, video recorder, or the camera/video function of a personal cellular phone, PDA, or any other digital imaging device at any emergency incident, within Plainsboro or on a mutual aid assignment, without the express permission of the OIC or PIO. No photographic or video images of motor vehicle incidents or any kind are permitted under any circumstances by direction of the Plainsboro Township Police Department.

4. All scene photography/video shall be for clinical, documentation, or training purposes only, and must be approved by the OIC of the scene, incident, or training activity, using approved department equipment. Scene photography/video may also be used for public relations purposes, but only with the approval of the OIC and PIO.

5. All photographs containing individually identifiable patient information are covered by HIPPA Privacy laws and must be protected in the same manner as patient care reports and documents.

6. Any on-scene images and or any other images taken by a member or employee in the course and scope of their employment or membership are the sole property of the Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 and are under the control of the Chief of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 or Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Plainsboro Fire District No. 1. This includes any images taken inadvertently with a member's personally owned camera, cell phone camera, PDA, or any other digital imaging device, images approved to be taken by an OIC or PIO, and images taken in violation of this policy.

7. Certain incidents to which members of the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or employees of Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 respond may be deemed a crime scene or require an investigation by law enforcement or fire investigators. Under no circumstances should any images/videos of such an incident scene be recorded, unless specifically requested or directed by a police officer. Any devices used to capture pictures or video in violation of this policy, whether directed by appropriate officials or not, may be confiscated and retained as evidence. Similarly, employees and members are prohibited from posting or distributing any detailed written descriptions of these incidents.

8. Employees and members are urged to use sound judgment in the use of any images, videos or verbal descriptions taken or written in the course of their employment or membership and the distribution of those images on personal websites or social networks including but not limited to Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, or other public safety agency websites, or e-mailing these images or descriptions to friends, relatives or colleagues. Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 and Plainsboro Fire Company No. 1 reserve the right to order the removal from social media or websites or other media of any images, video or descriptions resulting from employment or membership that are deemed to be inappropriate.

9. The use of helmet cameras or personal video cameras on or in the fire apparatus is strictly prohibited unless approved by the officer of said apparatus.

10. The personal use of Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and/or Plainsboro Fire District No. 1-owned cameras is strictly prohibited unless approved by a Line Officer.

11. This policy also covers the posting or use of any descriptions and personal opinions, written or verbal, or of any district/department activity, on any medium as described herein. Members are prohibited from engaging in e-mail or online postings regarding emergency incidents and/or operational information regarding Plainsboro Fire Company No. 1 or Plainsboro Fire District No. 1. Plainsboro Fire District No. 1 and Plainsboro Fire Company No. 1 reserve the right to order the removal from social media or websites or other media of any public statements that are deemed to be inappropriate.

12. The violation of this policy, or failure to permit inspection of any device covered under this policy, may result in disciplinary action including suspension or termination of membership in the Plainsboro Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 or employment with the Plainsboro Fire District No. 1.