

MAINE ASSOCIATION FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE

Media Policy

I. Background

- A. The Maine Association for Search and Rescue (MASAR) is committed to open and free flow of communications in all settings.
 - 1. MASAR uses a variety of media to keep its members, and the public, informed about its activities.
 - 2. Similar methods are used to disseminate educational information to all.
 - 3. MASAR personnel use social media for similar purposes.
- B. In the course of training, and when participating in SAR operations, MASAR personnel are exposed to personal and possibly confidential information involving the subject(s) of the SAR operation, the agency in charge, and cooperating agencies.
- C. This policy applies to all MASAR personnel in regard to MASAR activities. However, MASAR recommends that each MASAR Member unit draft its own policy to address how it, and its members, collects, publishes, or discloses information about its activities.
- D. Social Media
 - 1. Posting information on social media sites, which are generally considered to be in the public domain, involves some risk to the posting individual, the posting organization, and its members.
 - 2. Privacy, legal, and public-image issues should be considered before placing information on social media sites:
 - i. Public dissemination of confidential information can jeopardize the safety of the subject of a SAR operation; lead to public confusion; impede or damage the integrity of an ongoing investigation; or inaccurately represent a SAR operation.
 - ii. Public dissemination of privileged information can open MASAR, or a MASAR Member, to legal action.
 - iii. Public dissemination of inappropriate personal information can embarrass, or damage the credibility of, MASAR personnel.
 - 3. Information on social media sites is considered to be public knowledge, and therefore will be available to the prosecution in a lawsuit.

II. Definitions

- A. Social Media – The means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. This may be done by email, Internet, cell phone or any other digital electronic method. Social Media includes, but is not limited to, web sites, Facebook, Twitter, Wikis, Second Life, You Tube, and blogs.
- B. MASAR Personnel – All individuals with any type of membership status in any MASAR Member unit, and all individual MASAR Members.
- C. Confidential – meant to be kept secret within a certain circle of persons; not intended to be known publicly.

- D. Sensitive – In regard to an issue, capable of offending, upsetting or hurting.
- E. Public – Any person or entity that is not a member of MASAR, a MASAR Unit, or an Agency involved in a SAR operation.

III. General Limits on Collecting, Publishing, or Disclosing Information About MASAR Activities

- A. All MASAR personnel are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of information obtained as part of their SAR activities.
- B. Any confidential or sensitive information obtained by or provided to MASAR personnel during training or operations shall only be discussed, released, or communicated by any means to the public in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- C. SAR team members shall not photograph or make audio or video recordings of a subject of a SAR operation unless:
 - 1. A representative of the agency in charge has asked them to do so.
 - 2. A representative of the agency in charge has given permission to do so.
- D. MASAR personnel shall not publish or release, in any form or format, any confidential or sensitive information pertaining directly to a SAR mission's planning or operation, or the subject of a SAR mission, that has not been released by the agency in charge of the mission.
- E. Confidential or sensitive information includes, but may not be limited to:
 - 1. Descriptions of specific search areas, e.g. a street address or identifiable geographic location.
 - 2. Search or rescue management plans, decisions, and methods.
 - 3. Results of a SAR operation (unless released by the agency in charge).
 - 4. Maps, GPS tracks, or photographs that depict or clearly identify specific locations of SAR operations.
 - 5. Name(s) of subject(s) of SAR operations, and medical information not released by the agency in charge.
 - 6. Criticism of how a SAR operation was conducted
 - 7. Metadata on photographs or videos showing their location.
 - 8. Questions, concerns, or complaints about actions or practices of other SAR personnel, MASAR Units, or an Agency in charge.
- F. Information or media that have been released by the agency in charge may be used at any time.
- G. MASAR personnel wishing to post released information online shall provide a reference and/or link to the source. The source of the information shall be clearly stated or obvious in the post.
- H. Medical information collected during a SAR operation shall remain only on the run sheet that goes to the agency in charge of the incident or on a SOAP note that goes with the patient.
- I. The names of individuals involved in SAR operations should not be posted without their permission. Individuals should be identified as members of their respective unit(s) and not by their names, unless that information has already been released by the individual or by the agency in charge.

IV. News Media

- A. MASAR personnel may provide information to the media about their training, their unit's training, and their search and rescue experience.
- B. If asked to provide information to the media about MASAR itself, MASAR personnel shall refer the requesting party to the president or other officer of MASAR.
- C. If asked to provide information about a SAR operation, or MASAR's part in it, MASAR personnel shall refer the requesting party to the Incident Commander or, if available, the Public Information Officer.

V. Social Media Representing MASAR or MASAR Members

- A. Posting Information on Social Media representing MASAR
 - 1. All social media and web sites representing MASAR shall be set up and managed in a professional manner.
 - 2. Information posted on these sites shall be limited to the following:
 - i. Activities directly pertaining to SAR;
 - ii. Activities directly involving an agency which oversees, or directs, SAR operations;
 - iii. Information related to the education or training of SAR personnel.
 - iv. Posting(s) from other organizations followed by MASAR (e.g., "LIKED") shall be reviewed by the site administrator for appropriateness.
- B. MASAR personnel who do not wish to have their photo(s) displayed on social media sites representing MASAR must notify the president of MASAR or a member of the MASAR Board of Directors.

VI. Other Social Media and Web Sites

- A. Although MASAR cannot restrict what MASAR personnel post on their personal social media sites, MASAR personnel are advised to follow the recommendations in this policy. Failure to do so may lead to legal action against the individual or MASAR, or may result in suspension of the individual, or the individual's unit, from MASAR.
- B. It is strongly recommended that MASAR personnel avoid posting any discriminatory language, profanity, depictions of intoxication and/or illicit substance use, or evidence or indications of illegal activities on any social media sites.

VII. Oversight Responsibility

- A. Officers of MASAR member units are responsible for educating their unit's members about this policy.
- B. All MASAR and MASAR unit officers and directors are responsible for taking proper action if inappropriate social media usage by MASAR personnel pertaining to any SAR activities is identified.

VIII. Reporting and Investigation

- A. All MASAR personnel are responsible for reporting the release of SAR

- information that is not in accordance with this policy and shall immediately report it to their Unit officers or a MASAR officer or director.
- B. Evidence of the inappropriate release of information should be collected, if at all possible, and provided with the report.
 - C. All inappropriate releases of information shall be promptly investigated by the President or Vice President.

IX. Disciplinary Measures

- A. If any MASAR personnel are found to have engaged in the inappropriate release of information the officers of the MASAR Member unit(s) involved shall be informed immediately.
- B. Disciplinary action for a first offense shall be the responsibility of the officers of a MASAR Unit Member. If it is a first offense for an Associate or Sustaining Member, the chairman of the MASAR Board of Directors shall send a written warning by registered mail.
- C. If a second offense occurs, the MASAR Member will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of MASAR's Board of Directors. Such disciplinary action may include removal from MASAR.