

# Personal conduct, social media and the Postal Service

**T**he Postal Service and NALC have a long history of earning high levels of public respect and trust. City letter carriers take pride in this history and always strive to present a positive image to the community. Acknowledging this tradition of respect, the Postal Service has certain expectations for the conduct of letter carriers. If you are new to USPS and NALC, these expectations may be unfamiliar to you. This article will briefly describe these expectations and summarize how they relate to employees' use of social media.

Section 665.16 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* outlines the overall expectations regarding conduct in and out of the workplace.

## **665.16 Behavior and Personal Habits**

Employees are expected to conduct themselves during and outside of working hours in a manner that reflects favorably upon the Postal Service. Although it is not the policy of the Postal Service to interfere with the private lives of employees, it does require that postal employees be honest, reliable, trustworthy, courteous, and of good character and reputation. The Federal Standards of Ethical Conduct referenced in 662.1 also contain regulations governing the off-duty behavior of postal employees. Employees must not engage in criminal, dishonest, notoriously disgraceful, immoral, or other conduct prejudicial to the Postal Service. Conviction for a violation of any criminal statute may be grounds for disciplinary action against an employee, including removal of the employee, in addition to any other penalty imposed pursuant to statute.

Chapter 1 Section 112 of the *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities*, reads in part:

**112.52** Conduct affairs of personal life in a way that will reflect creditably on both you and the Postal Service.

Keep the *ELM* and *M-41* guidelines above in mind when interacting with the public or using social media. The

official Postal Service social media policy is contained in Section 363 of the *Administrative Support Manual (ASM)*. The USPS social media policy mainly addresses the conduct of employees who use social media in their official capacity to communicate with the public or other employees. To review *ASM* Section 363, visit [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) and choose the *Workplace Issues/Resources/USPS Handbooks and Manuals* tab to view the complete *ASM*.

While the *ASM* guidelines do not limit an employee's participation in union social media activity, there are specific rules contained in the Hatch Act that apply to union political activity and social media. For more information on the "dos and don'ts" related to the Hatch Act and social media, visit the "Government Affairs">"Political" tabs on the NALC website at [nalc.org](http://nalc.org).

Recently, the Postal Service has issued reminders to employees about these expectations and specifically employees' behavior when interacting and posting on social media. A USPS Retail and Delivery stand-up talk issued in October reminds employees of the *ASM* rule prohibiting them from speaking on behalf of the organization on websites, blogs and social media without permission. Postal employees must receive written permission from the Postal Service social media team and the appropriate vice president before establishing any online accounts that represent the Postal Service.

USPS does not intend to have this policy infringe on employees' ability to have their own social media presence or personal accounts. However, be cautious when making posts related to your job with USPS. The stand-up talk also reminds employees that they should not post while on the clock. This includes "selfies" in the plant, post office, vehicle



or other official workplace areas. While social media videos and reels of letter carriers performing their duties and interacting with customers can often be entertaining and heartwarming, be aware that these may not be favorably received by the Postal Service.

You have the right to use personal social media outside of work hours at your discretion; however, be careful. Comments or videos you make on social media may be misinterpreted by customers, co-workers or management, which could create difficulties in the workplace. The *ASM* reminds employees to always be respectful, whether in the actual or virtual world. The Postal Service Standard of Conduct states: "Employees are expected to maintain harmonious working relationships and not to do anything that would contribute to an unpleasant working environment." *ASM* Section 363.B advises employees to "not verbally attack other individuals or companies. This includes fellow employees, contractors, customers, vendors, and competitors."

Remember that anything you post might be visible to anyone—including postal managers and the public—and could be there forever.

Be mindful of your personal conduct and what you are posting on social media—you never know who could be watching. **PR**