



# MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 102.06

VOLUME: 1

SUBJECT: Cellular Phone and Camera Use

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: 3/1/2011

Chris J. Mullins, Fire Chief

**SCOPE AND PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to give guidance and direction to personnel with respect to cell phone and camera use in order to prevent distractions in the workplace, maintain professional conduct, and to help ensure the safety and privacy of all personnel and the citizens/customers that we serve.

**POLICY:** Cellular phone use and use of blackberry's and other personal digital assistants (PDAs) while on duty should be primarily focused on necessary work-related calls made on department issued phones and devices. Personal use of cell phones – whether personal or department issued – is only permitted during times when work responsibilities are not being performed. Use of personal cameras – whether cell phone cameras, stand-alone cameras, or cameras contained on any such personal devices, or conventional film cameras – while on duty or when performing any patient care functions, or when on any emergency scene for or on the behalf of the City of Mountain Brook Fire Department – is strictly prohibited.

**Cellular Telephone Use:** Personal cellular telephones are permitted to be carried while on duty, but must be placed in silent mode, and allow voice mail to answer the call. Messages may be checked on “down time” when not actively involved at an incident, when not in a classroom environment, or when not actively involved in routine station maintenance or other work duties. All personal cell phones must be “intrinsically safe” consistent with the national standards for portable electronic equipment (such as portable radios) carried by emergency service personnel into hazardous environments, and be carried in a safe and concealed area on the person that does not interfere with the physical requirements of the job, will not fall off, or cause others to be distracted by the presence or appearance of the device.

Cellular phones may be used for personal purposes on limited basis. Lengthy conversations should generally be avoided during daytime routines, but may be longer during the afterhours period. Personal cell phone use must never be cause for delay in responding to a patient or beginning an assignment, and should never be used while completing an assignment. Performing your work while using a personal cell phone is prohibited. Your work and your co-workers deserve your full attention.

While attending to a patient or while operating a fire department emergency vehicle, personnel shall not, under any circumstances, respond to (or make) a personal cellular telephone call, send text messages, or check electronic mail on PDAs or other such devices. The use of ear pieces or other amplified devices permitting hands free use is permissible while operating a staff vehicle.

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Personnel are prohibited from using personal cellular telephones or PDAs between the Pre-alerting/Dispatch of a call and the time that the call is cleared and the unit place in service. This would include time in the emergency room at hospitals where patients are delivered. Full attention is required in the performance of emergency functions and coordination with co-workers.

**Camera Use:** Without direct permission from the Shift Commander, under no circumstances shall any personnel be permitted to use the camera function of a personal cellular telephone while on duty.

Personnel are only permitted to use cameras or other picture taking or image generating devices authorized and/or issued by the City of Mountain Brook Fire Department while on duty. Any department issued devices are intended to be used for incident documentation, accident or fire scene investigation and medical purposes such as documenting the position of vehicles and patients at the scene of an accident or to document mechanism of injury for sue by the receiving facility to assist in guiding treatment. No other picture taking devices including personal electronic devices, PDAs, cameras, or other personal computers (not issued or authorized by the City of Mountain Brook Fire Department for patient care purposes) shall be used by personnel while on duty.

All on-scene photography shall be for clinical and/or documentation purposes only and conducted only at the direction of, and permission from, the incident commander in charge of the scene.

All photographs containing individually identifiable information are covered by the department's HIPPA Privacy Rule and must be protected in the same manner as patient care reports and other such documentation.

Any on-scene images or other images taken by an employee in the course and scope of their employment are solely the property of the City of Mountain Brook Fire Department and not the property of the individual staff member. This would include images taken on camera or other equipment not being the property of the City of Mountain Brook Fire Department.

No images taken by an employee in the course and scope of their employment may be used, printed, copied, scanned, e-mailed, posted, shared or distributed in any manner without the express, written approval of the City of Mountain Brook Fire Chief or his designee.

Example: This prohibition includes posting photos on personal web sites, such as Facebook or Myspace, or on other public safety agency web sites, or e-mailing images to friends, colleagues or others in the Fire and EMS industry.

**Off-Duty/Fire Department Photography:** Off-duty personnel should use caution/good judgement in taking photographs in and around fire stations. This would especially apply to pictures that are posted to web sites, etc. Personnel should refrain from taking inappropriate photographs of personnel or other photographs that would reflect poorly on the City and the fire department.