

**COUNTY OF MONROE
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

GENERAL ORDER MULTI BUREAU	DATE OF ISSUE JANUARY 7, 2025	EFFECTIVE DATE JANUARY 7, 2025	NO. 111-25
SUBJECT: GENERAL ORDER Gossip Prevention Policy		DISTRIBUTION All personnel	AMENDS
REFERENCE:			RESCINDS

Purpose: To establish guidelines for limiting gossip within the Monroe County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to promote a professional work environment, enhance team cohesion, and maintain trust, integrity, and respect among employees and the public we serve.

Scope: This policy applies to all employees of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, including full-time, part-time, volunteer, contract and temporary personnel.

Policy: Gossip in the workplace worsens officer safety, reduces operational effectiveness, undermines teamwork, damages trust, and hinders professional relationships. Employees of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office will refrain from participating in or spreading gossip that could negatively impact the agency's work environment or the reputation of fellow employees or this agency. This General Order in no way undermines or limits the application and protection afforded by statutory whistleblower protection found in Chapter 8 of the Monroe County Administrative Code.

Definitions:

Gossip: Unverified or speculative conversation about individuals or events that is typically private, personal, or inflammatory in nature, which can harm reputations or work relationships.

Workplace Gossip: Any verbal or written communication that serves no constructive purpose and focuses on rumors, personal matters, or unconfirmed information about employees, supervisors, or organizational operations.

Malicious Gossip: Intentionally spreading false information or rumors designed to harm or discredit someone's reputation or career.

I. Guidelines:

A. Professional Communication:

1. Employees are expected to engage in productive, professional communication focused on work-related matters.
2. Discussions should remain relevant to work tasks, team goals, and organizational objectives.

3. There is an expectation that in the appropriate setting and at the appropriate time employees will partake of ordinary conversation unrelated to work-related matters.

B. Confidentiality:

1. Employees will respect the privacy of others and avoid sharing sensitive or personal information about colleagues without their consent.
2. Information regarding investigations, disciplinary actions, or personnel issues should remain confidential and not be discussed casually or spread inside or outside MCSO.

C. Impact on Workplace Morale:

1. Employees should be aware that gossip negatively affects morale, productivity, and team dynamics.
2. Employees are encouraged to be proactive in stopping gossip by redirecting conversations to constructive topics or reporting concerns to supervisors.
3. Supervisors at every level have a duty to intervene when hearing gossip among subordinates, peers and senior supervisors.

D. Handling Gossip:

1. Employees who become aware of harmful or malicious gossip will report the behavior to their immediate supervisor or first command officer in their chain of command not involved in the gossip.
2. Supervisors must take appropriate action to address gossip, including conducting coaching and counselling or, if necessary, escalating the issue for disciplinary review.
3. All reports will be treated with confidentiality, and retaliation against whistleblowers is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

E. Zero Tolerance for Gossip:

1. The Monroe County Sheriff's Office will not tolerate gossip.
2. Any employee found engaging in or perpetuating any type of workplace or malicious gossip will be referred to Internal Affairs for investigation that can result in disciplinary charges and discipline, pursuant to the appropriate CBA.

F. Positive Communication Encouragement:

1. Employees are encouraged to build a positive value based work culture by engaging in supportive conversations that uplift, motivate, and contribute to team success.
2. MCSO will periodically offer training on communication skills, conflict resolution, and the impact of gossip to reinforce these values.

G. Reporting Procedure:

1. Employees can report incidents of gossip or related behavior that violates this policy to their immediate supervisor or the first command officer in their chain of command.
2. Reports should be made promptly and should include specific details of the event(s) in question.
3. Supervisors are responsible for conducting initial investigations, when appropriate taking suitable non-disciplinary corrective actions, and when required report the incident to Internal Affairs through their chain of command, maintaining confidentiality throughout the process.

H. Disciplinary Action:

1. Violations of this policy will result in corrective (coaching counselling and/or training) and/or disciplinary action, as sanctioned by current CBA's and MCSO policy.
2. The nature and severity of the disciplinary action will depend on factors such as the intent behind the gossip, its impact on the work environment, and whether the employee has previously been warned about similar conduct.

By Order of the Sheriff,



Todd K. Baxter