



SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The use of Social Media has become an integral aspect of communications throughout the hockey community in Alberta.

Hockey Alberta utilizes various social media channels to promote the organization, its programs and partnerships. Currently, Hockey Alberta utilizes official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn for delivering messages and information to the hockey community across Alberta and beyond.

Utilizing social media effectively requires following certain rules and guidelines, exercising care and caution, educating on the best practices for utilizing social media channels, and, when required, assessing disciplinary action or sanction to individuals who engage in Unacceptable Conduct when using social media.

Hockey Alberta's use of social media involves potentially every program/ event area, staff member, volunteer, Member Association and Team, as well as players and all stakeholders.

This document provides an overview of how Hockey Alberta utilizes social media in its overall Communication Plan, guidelines for staff and volunteers on best practices when using social media, guidelines to Team Alberta members, and direction to member organizations on developing and implementing their own policies and procedures.



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SOCIAL MEDIA AT HOCKEY ALBERTA

Overview

Positive and successful communications by Hockey Alberta require an effective plan to create and ensure the accuracy of needed materials, and arrange to have them distributed through appropriate channels. Communications initiatives require deliberate thought and planning with regard to the best way to create and deliver the message to reach the target audience(s).

Hockey Alberta utilizes current and emerging technology and media to conduct the day-to-day business of the organization, be as engaging and interactive as possible, and to promote and maintain a positive image in the hockey community. As a result, the use of social media is a key part of Communications, Marketing and other strategies undertaken by Hockey Alberta.

The main goal of social media use for Hockey Alberta is to drive visitor traffic to hockeyalberta.ca, by providing as much information as possible, without overloading the user.

As part of that central goal, other objectives for the use of social media use for Hockey Alberta are:

- Increasing public awareness of who Hockey Alberta is, and what we do
- Sharing news and important information
- Sharing good news/success stories
- Engaging with followers and stakeholders
- Providing behind-the-scenes looks at Hockey Alberta events

Best Practices and Guidelines

The Communications unit is responsible for the day-to-day operations and monitoring of Hockey Alberta's social media channels, and ensuring that best practices and planning are utilized to help ensure that Hockey Alberta's social media usage is effective and wide-ranging.

Official Accounts

Facebook: HockeyAlberta

Twitter: @HockeyAlberta, @HockeyABFdn

YouTube: Hockey Alberta

LinkedIn: hockey-alberta

Alternate Accounts

Twitter: @TeamABHockey, @AFHL_HA, @HA_Development, @HAHockeyOps



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Individual Accounts

@DanieKraichyHA

@MKraichy_HA

@JustinFesyk_HA

Individual Twitter accounts are no longer created for Hockey Alberta staff members. When a staff member with a personal account leaves Hockey Alberta, s/he will be asked to shut down the individual account as part of the departure process.

Creating New Accounts

If a business unit or individual staff member believes that the creation of a new social media account (for example, a new Twitter handle) would be beneficial to promoting Hockey Alberta, its programs and partnerships, the request (including supporting rationale) should be submitted to the Coordinator Online/Digital Communications. The request will be discussed by the Communications unit and the requester, with a decision made based on how the request fits into the overall Social Media communications plan for the organization. If a new account is created, it will be done by the Communications unit, with login information maintained by the Coordinator Online/Digital Communications.

Posting Guidelines

The general target for Hockey Alberta's main social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) is 3-5 posts per day. That number of posts has been identified as the optimum number to register highly with the algorithms used by online search engines and the individual social media platforms. Schedules are developed for posting content over a number of days, rather than posting too much information in one day. We also work to ensure that regular posts occur on the official Hockey Alberta Foundation Twitter feed.

All official posts pertaining to Hockey Alberta or the Hockey Alberta Foundation come from those two accounts: @HockeyAlberta or @HockeyABFdn.

Hockey Alberta also has several alternate Twitter accounts which focus on a specific program area or business unit of the organization. These accounts are designed to be used when delivering messages to specific audiences or during events that require numerous posts (for example, game updates during a tournament). Rather than using Hockey Alberta's main social media channels for these constant updates, interested followers are directed to the appropriate channel for these updates.

Staff members with Individual accounts are encouraged to post information and updates pertaining to their business areas, events they are attending etc.



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Shares/Retweets

Hockey Alberta often retweets or shares posts made by others on Twitter or Facebook, when they are of interest to our followers or help promote Hockey Alberta, its programs and partnerships. Hockey Alberta will not retweet or share any offensive posts, or any post that is deemed unprofessional.

Staff are encouraged to promote Hockey Alberta on their personal accounts, and individual _ha accounts, and retweet/share posts made from Hockey Alberta accounts.

Due to the nature of their position, some staff members outside of the Communications unit may have access to one or more social media accounts to post live updates etc from Hockey Alberta events. Those staff members are reminded to post first from the official or alternate Hockey Alberta account, and then retweet or share from a personal or individual _ha account.

Requesting a post

Staff are encouraged to utilize Hockey Alberta's social media channels to promote an upcoming event, share news and information, or to increase awareness of what they/their business unit do on a day-to-day basis.

Should a staff member or business unit require a post on social media, the request should be made with as much notice as possible so that it can be worked into the posting schedule. In making the request, please ensure the necessary information is included. We understand situations arise with little notice, and we will do our best to accommodate all requests, but it may not always be possible to post on a specific time/date due to other posts scheduled, or a conflict with one or more of Hockey Alberta's social media guidelines.

Content

Any content posted on any Hockey Alberta social media channel should be engaging, accurate, and purposeful. Where possible, posts from official Hockey Alberta social media channels should be reviewed by a member of the Communications unit before posting.

Scheduling of posts

The Communications unit utilizes several best practice guidelines in determining when content is posted on social media. Any news stories, ticker posts, media releases, or campaign monitor emails are generally sent out at 11 a.m. on weekdays.

If a post is required to be made outside of office hours, it can be scheduled on both Facebook and Twitter. The schedule function on both platforms is utilized to ensure content is posted on evenings and weekends when applicable.



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Hashtags

Hashtags are used primarily on Twitter and Instagram, and now more recently Facebook, as a quick-search function for a particular subject. While many hashtags exist, Hockey Alberta generally uses a select group of hashtags that have program or historical significance for the organization. Some examples include: #AlbertaBuilt, #HockeyForLife, #LTPD, #ABCup, #PeeweeProspects, #ABCChallenge, #HAProvincials, #ATBProvincials, #EKEC.

Certain hashtags are used in conjunction with a specific league (#AJHL, #WHL, etc.), tournament (#U16ChallengeCup, #U18Nationals, etc.), partner/sponsor campaign (Pembina's #PlayItSafe, for example), or certain trends (#BellLetsTalk, #CoachesWeek, etc.).

Link Shortening

Bit.ly is a site that takes any link, and shortens it, giving posts a cleaner look. The second part of the link can be customized to tell users what they are looking at. For example, bit.ly/2bSrliS can be changed to bit.ly/TeamSchedule. Hockey Alberta has a free account with Bit.ly, which allows us to track how many people click on each link posted, and on which platforms.



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Hockey Alberta Policy – Unacceptable Conduct on Social Media

Hockey Alberta is committed to respectful behavior and conduct both on and off the ice, and works to eliminate any disrespectful conduct and discriminatory practices including abuse, neglect and harassment.

Unacceptable Conduct is not condoned by Hockey Alberta on any Hockey Alberta, personal or other social media channel or account. This includes conduct by staff, volunteers, players, referees, Member organizations, stakeholders or any member of the hockey community.

The following examples of unacceptable conduct are considered contrary to Hockey Alberta's social media guidelines and subject to disciplinary action:

- Bullying, harassment, intimidation or threats of any type.
- Making negative or derogatory comments about, or statements deemed detrimental to the welfare of, any individual or group.
- Divulging confidential information or any other matter of a sensitive nature.
- Posting photographs, video or comments promoting negative influences or criminal behavior, including but not limited to drug use, alcohol abuse, public intoxication, hazing, and sexual harassment.
- Undertaking activity that contradicts the current policies of Hockey Alberta or any of its Member organizations.
- Undertaking activity that is meant to alarm other individuals or to misrepresent fact or truth.

When unacceptable conduct is discovered on social media by staff, volunteers or program areas directly controlled by Hockey Alberta, details of the unacceptable conduct will be provided for review to the appropriate Senior Manager or Manager, as well as Human Resources.

Hockey Alberta's preference is to educate, inform and help develop positive habits when unacceptable or inappropriate comments or posts occur on its social media channels.

When required, disciplinary action or sanction will be assessed toward the individual making the unacceptable posts. Depending on the nature of the infraction, discipline or sanction can include the individual being banned or blocked from Hockey Alberta's social media channels, suspension from or being relieved of employment or volunteer status, to the RCMP or other authorities being called.



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PROCESS AND PROCEDURE

When a situation of unacceptable conduct on social media is identified involving staff, volunteers or program areas directly controlled by Hockey Alberta, the following process will occur:

1. **Acknowledgement:** the allegation will be acknowledged by Senior Management and Human Resources.
2. **Investigation:** a thorough investigation will be conducted, with findings to Hockey Alberta's Human Resources department. *During the period of the investigation, if the unacceptable conduct occurred on a Hockey Alberta social media channel, the individual will be blocked from having access to post on those channels.*
3. **Hearing:** if the investigation determines sufficient evidence to proceed, the individual will be notified and given the opportunity to present evidence in his/her defence.
4. **Sanctions:** based on the evidence presented at the hearing, a determination will be made on whether sanction is required.
5. **Appeal:** the individual may appeal the sanction, using the specified appeal process.
6. **Document retention:** if/when an appeal is heard, all final decisions and other applicable information will be stored according to Hockey Alberta's document retention policy.

NOTE: Where the unacceptable conduct involves abuse, neglect or harassment of any type, and Hockey Alberta has a reasonable belief such unacceptable conduct has occurred, the matter may be turned over to the RCMP or other appropriate external authorities.

For more information, see:

Appendix 1, Best Practices in Social Media – General Advice and Tips

Appendix 2, Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Staff

Appendix 3, Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Volunteers

Appendix 4, Social Media Guidelines – Team Alberta Players

Appendix 5, Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Referees



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Hockey Alberta Members – Social Media Policy/ Procedure

As per Hockey Alberta's Social Media Policy (see pages 6-7), Unacceptable Conduct on social media is not condoned by Hockey Alberta, and is not to be condoned by its Member organizations when it:

- Involves members of the organization (including players and/or parents),
- Involves staff or volunteers or program areas directly controlled by the organization, or
- Occurs on the social media channels created and utilized by the organization.

As per Hockey Alberta's Unacceptable Conduct policy, Hockey Alberta expects that each Member organization will have policy and procedural language in place when behaviour on social media constitutes unacceptable conduct, abuse and/or harassment.

There are two options for a Member organization:

- integrate unacceptable conduct on social media channels into existing code of conduct and discipline policies; or
- create a separate social media policy.

Whichever option is chosen, the policy and procedural language should include:

- a general statement regarding how social media is used by the organization
- a statement of what constitutes unacceptable conduct/behaviour on social media by its members
- an outline of best practices and recommendations on how to utilize social media channels to promote positively the organization, its members, programs and partnerships.
- a statement of the process and procedures by which the organization will investigate and adjudicate situations of unacceptable conduct/ behaviour on social media by its members
- the range of potential disciplinary action that could be assessed; and
- the appeal process after disciplinary action is taken.

Please note: the format used in Hockey Alberta's Social Media Strategy document can be used to assist Members in developing their own social media policy language.

For more information, see:

Appendix 1, Best Practices in Social Media – General Advice and Tips



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Appendix 1

Best Practices in Social Media – General Advice and Tips

Social Media has placed increased pressure on everyone. News, comments and opinions are shared immediately. Your personal reputation, as well as your organization and Hockey Alberta is at stake, with every post. Therefore, before you post, **T-H-I-N-K!**

T - Is it **T**True?

H – Is it **H**urtful?

I – Is it **I**llegal?

N – Is it **N**ecessary?

K – Is it **K**ind?

Based on your answers to these five questions, **THINK** about whether the post should be made. Would you say it to someone in person? If not, it is probably not a suitable post for any medium.

If the post is suitable to share, here are some ways to help get maximum readership for your post, while also representing yourself, your organization, and Hockey Alberta positively:

- Be creative and engaging, positive and professional
- Celebrate achievements
- Spellcheck and use proper grammar
- Choose the social media platform(s) that best suit your targeted audience
- Find the balance between originality and following trends
- Engage follows and make them feel part of the team
- Observe and take part in global social media trends

Dealing with Negative Posts

- Screenshot the post, so you have evidence if it is subsequently deleted.
- Don't feel obligated to answer EVERY negative tweet, message, etc.
- When responding, always be professional
- Encourage them to email, or even call if they have an issue
- Don't engage in an argument – social media arguments are a spectator sport

Dealing with the Media

- The media will often call other organizations looking for comment on what another group has done or said. You are not obligated to say anything.
- "If it's not your fire, don't talk about it!"
- If the media calls about something that has occurred or been posted within your organization, take whatever time is necessary before you respond. Ask yourself "do I know the whole story?" before answering any questions.



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Marketing With Social Media

- 1 social media view = 1 free advertisement
- Share important dates/schedules
- Game day promotion
- Merchandise/ticket giveaways
- Sponsorship opportunities



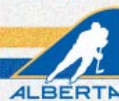
Why Use Social Media?

- Marketing opportunities
- Increase fan base
- Increased fan interaction
- Create/display your teams identity
- Share news/stories/events



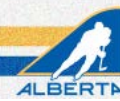
Increasing Fan Base and Fan Interaction

- Encourage fans, opposing fans, and other interested parties to follow
- Provide consistent, engaging content to gain new followers and keep current followers interested
- Keep fans updated 24/7
- Put fans in the seats – ticket giveaways, deals, game day stories, etc.



Creating/Displaying a Team Identity

- Share team news/events
- Share team or player-related stories
- Get the players involved
- Share community involvement and events



The Dos

- BE CREATIVE AND ENGAGING
- Spellcheck and use proper grammar
- Share in-game/post-game updates and results
- CELEBRATE THE TEAM, PLAYERS AND FANS
- Create/implement a social media policy
- Choose the social media platform(s) that best suit your targeted audience
- Use analytics to find what does/doesn't work
- Observe other teams/organizations on social media
- Use hashtags to create a brand. (Ex: #HJHL, #RedDeerVipers, etc)



The Dos

- Appoint/search for a designated social media person
- Encourage players and other team members to take an active role
- Create recurring post themes (Ex: Trivia Tuesday, Throwback Thursday (#TBT), weekly player profiles, etc.)
- Find the balance between originality and following trends
- Utilize popular memes and GIFs
- Engage follows and make them feel part of the team
- Observe and take part in global social media trends
- Engage with opposing teams – **in a friendly manner**

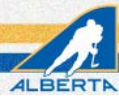




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Dealing With The Negative

- Don't feel obligated to answer EVERY negative tweet, message, etc.
- Reflect on the issue brought forth
- When responding, always be professional
- Encourage them to email, or even call if they have an issue
- Don't engage in an argument – social media arguments are a spectator sport



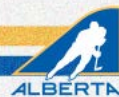
The Don'ts

- Post ANYTHING negative
- Engage with opposing fans, etc.
- Completely ignore those who Tweet you, send you a message, etc.
- Post anything that you won't want EVERYONE to see – Even private posts aren't completely private
- Post anything that isn't 100% factual
- Spam anyone's feed (too many posts, retweets, shares, etc.)
- Be self-serving
- Portray the team, or player(s) in a negative way
- Use text language or bad grammar
- Create a social media account and never use it



Player Use

- Establish a player use policy for your team
- Inappropriate social media use WILL happen, so be prepared to deal with it
- Decide who, if anyone, will monitor player's social media accounts
- Keep players accountable for their actions on social media – Remind them that ANYONE can find them on social media.
- Encourage them to **T-H-I-N-K**



Summary

- Embrace social media
- If you do use it, use it as often and effectively as possible
- Stay connected with your fan base 24/7, 365 days a year
- Create a social media plan/policy
- Encourage player use, but keep them accountable
- Utilize the resources available to you
- Before you post, **T-H-I-N-K**
- **Have fun with it**





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Appendix 2

Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Staff

(Content in this section excerpted from Hockey Alberta Staff Handbook.)

Staff will be held accountable for what they write or post on social media or online. Inflammatory comments, unprofessional or disparaging remarks made about the organization, its employees, customers, vendors or competitors may result in disciplinary action.

Be authentic: Be honest about your identity. If you choose to post about Hockey Alberta, identify yourself as a Hockey Alberta staff member. Never hide your identity for the purpose of promoting Hockey Alberta through social media. At the same time, protect your identity by not putting out too much personal information.

Be accurate: Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with one or more sources than have to post a correction or retraction later. Quote and link to your sources whenever possible. Respect copyright laws and never plagiarize. *If you make an error*, correct it quickly and visibly.

Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Hockey Alberta, its partners, or your co-workers. Use good ethical judgement and follow Hockey Alberta policies. As a guideline do not post anything that you would not say in front of your co-workers.

Be respectful: You are representing yourself as well as Hockey Alberta, and even if you include a disclaimer on a personal account, your comments will be connected to Hockey Alberta. Hockey incites a certain passion in many, and you will be more successful in communicating your idea if you are constructive and respectful. Under no circumstances engage in an online argument - it will waste time, result in a lot of frustration, and could have an impact on Hockey Alberta's image. Finally do not respond to disrespectful postings.

Be thoughtful: If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, delay posting until you are calm and clear headed. Libel and slander about individuals are not protected (you are legally liable) nor is confidential company information. Very controversial comments or those that show a general lack of empathy should not be shared on social media, or probably anywhere.

Finally if you have issues with your job at Hockey Alberta, discuss it with your supervisor. Social media is not the medium to vent your grievances.



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Appendix 3

Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Volunteers

(Content in this section excerpted from Hockey Alberta Volunteer Handbook.)

Hockey Alberta volunteers are accountable for what they post on social media channels, and other online locations. As a Hockey Alberta representative, when using social media, either personally or as a Hockey Alberta volunteer, it is important to remember that to the public and hockey community, you are a representative of Hockey Alberta, and negative comments may reflect poorly on the organization and its members. Even with a disclaimer, people will identify you as a Hockey Alberta representative, so ensure that you “take the high road” in all posts:

- **Be respectful**
 - o Do not post inflammatory comments, unprofessional or disparaging remarks about Hockey Alberta, its employees, Members, stakeholders, customers, vendors or competitors on any social media channel. These types of comments will not be tolerated, and may result in disciplinary action.
 - o If you have concerns with Hockey Alberta, discuss it through the proper channels and with the proper staff members.
- **Be authentic**
 - o Identify yourself in all posts and acknowledge that you are part of Hockey Alberta.
 - o If you share a social media account, such as Twitter, any comments posted from that account, whether or not posted by you, may be associated with you and with Hockey Alberta. You are responsible for ensuring posts made by family members do not reflect negatively on Hockey Alberta.
- **Be thoughtful**
 - o Ensure that what you are posting is truthful, in good taste, and does not infringe on someone’s human and/or legal rights. Libel or slander about any individual or organization is not protected.
 - o Do not disclose confidential information.
 - o Very controversial comments or those that show a general lack of empathy should not be shared on social media, or probably anywhere.
 - o You are legally liable for what you post.
- **Be aware and safe**
 - o Never pretend to be someone else and post about Hockey Alberta.
 - o At the same time, protect your identity by not putting out too much personal information.



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Appendix 4

Social Media Guidelines – Team Alberta players

As a member of Team Alberta, as well as a public personality associated with Hockey Alberta, you are an ambassador for the sport of hockey and our organization. Unfortunately, everything you say is on the record and many athletes have already learned the hard way that social media can also be detrimental. With that in mind, it is important to remember the following guidelines:

1. Be clear, cautious and correct when posting.
 - Avoid controversial topics.
 - Be clear. Sarcasm can be misinterpreted.
 - Avoid any word or expression that could be interpreted as racist, sexist, or prejudicial.
 - Avoid salty or dirty language. Please be a positive role model.
 - Proofread what you are writing for content and typos before publishing.
 - Be careful with photos you post, and with people with whom you take photos.
2. Be careful with who you Friend or Follow, or engage with regularly.
 - Avoid people who engage in foul language, may be involved in controversial activities, or who post photos that feature extreme activities such as alcohol consumption.
 - Quietly block or unfollow anyone who offends you. Do it, don't announce it.
 - Don't over-interact with your personal friends on Twitter; use direct messaging.
 - On Facebook, play it safe with the information you share. Someone who is a friend today could eventually use private content against you.
3. Use social media for positive reasons, not negative.
 - Do not fight your battles on Social Media. If you disagree with decisions made, use the proper route to voice your opinion, when appropriate.
 - Do not engage when someone is posting negatively. Ignore or block that person.
 - Answer legitimate questions when you can, without disclosing confidential information. Make sure you understand the limitations of what you can post before you do.
 - Share and retweet relevant Hockey Alberta posts to help promote hockey in general.
 - Avoid complaining about the hardships related to being an athlete, a coach or a member of player personnel (long or difficult training sessions, long flights, etc.). Many Albertans would love face such challenges and may take offense to your complaints.



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4. Be aware when it comes to overall safety and security.
 - Beware of identity theft. Use elaborate passwords for all your social media accounts. Use a password like “Tg48Xyh2” as opposed to “H0ckey”.
 - If you are victim of online identity theft, inform a Team Alberta staff member.
 - If you notice any suspicious activity or a potential hacking against someone involved with Hockey Alberta, let a staff member know.
 - Post about where you’ve been as opposed to where you are heading. Unless of course you’re attending a public event which you are trying to promote.

5. DO NOT:
 - Publish pictures or personal information about teammates or team staff without their prior consent.
 - Make announcements about your team unless given permission by Team Alberta staff (Injuries, lines, roster, composition, identity of the captain, etc.);
 - Comment or promote a position that may be detrimental to the team or Hockey Alberta.
 - Criticize referees or event organizers.



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Appendix 5

Social Media Guidelines – Hockey Alberta Referees

(Content in this section excerpted from Hockey Alberta Referee Council policy.)

These guidelines are applicable to all members of the Hockey Alberta's referee community, including council members and staff, on-ice and off-ice officials. The guidelines include communications through all social media channels, electronic messaging (such as texting), Internet media and websites.

Referees are to conduct themselves in appropriate and professional manners at all times. Once comments are posted or sent they cannot be retracted. Ultimately, each individual referee is solely responsible for his/her comments.

- Use your best judgment – THINK before posting or sending.
- Comments of an inappropriate nature which are detrimental to Hockey Alberta, a team, fellow officials or any individual are not tolerated and are subject to disciplinary action.
- Do not divulge confidential information about an individual or team, including business or game strategy that could give someone else a competitive advantage.
- Do not discuss injury information about any player.
- If requested to participate in an online network, as a direct result of your affiliation with or participation in the Hockey Alberta Referee's Council, the Council recommends that you request approval from the Zone Chairman of your applicable zone or the Provincial Chairman.
- On-ice officials are not to post on social media within two hours of the start of a game and one hour following completion.

The Hockey Alberta Referee's Council will investigate reported violation(s) of this policy in the manner set out in the Discipline Policy for other types of violations. If the investigation determines that a violation has occurred, the appropriate Zone Executive or the Provincial Executive will impose appropriate discipline, which could include a suspension. Any appeal of the suspension will be dealt with as set out in policies set out by the Hockey Alberta Referee's Council.