

WASHINGTON COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose

Washington County (“County”) has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the County to media representatives and on County authorized social media sites. This policy establishes the County’s requirements pertaining to the use of social media. A related policy addresses interactions with traditional media organizations.

To address the increased use of the Internet and the ways that county residents prefer to communicate and obtain information online, County departments may consider approving staff use of authorized social media tools.

Scope

This policy applies to all County employees and will be administered by the County Administrator’s Office in accord with the Washington County Charter (Chapter III, Section 34) and Code of Ordinances (Section 2.04.100). This policy is not applicable to the County's elected officials.

Definitions

“Social media” is an umbrella term for various forms of communication consisting of user-created text, audio, video or other content published in a shared online environment, such as over the Internet or through mobile telephone networks.

Different forms of social media generally have the common characteristic of allowing personal participation and feedback in a fast and informal manner. Social media is also typically open to vast multitudes of people to observe, copy, and use, often with few (if any) access restrictions.

Examples of social media tools include but are not limited to:

- Social network sites, such as Facebook and Google Plus
- Business networking services, such as LinkedIn
- Blogs and micro blogs such as Twitter
- Content-sharing services, such as YouTube and Flickr
- Texts
- Internal forums/message boards
- Podcasts
- Wikis, such as Wikipedia

Policy

The County encourages the appropriate use of authorized social media tools to further the mission, vision and guiding principles of the County organization.

County Social Media Sites

1. All County authorized social media sites used or established by departments will be subject to approval by the County Administrator or his/her designee.
2. The County's website (<http://www.co.washington.or.us>) and any additional County authorized websites will remain the County's primary and predominant Internet presence.
 - a. Appropriate County uses of social media tools fall generally into three categories:
 - (i) As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information).
 - (ii) As marketing/promotional channels which increase the County's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience.
 - (iii) As channels for engaging in dialogue with and gaining input from the public about various County projects and programs.
 - b. Whenever possible, content posted to County authorized social media sites will also be available on the County's main website.
 - c. In general, content posted to County authorized social media sites should refer users back to the County's official website or other County-authorized websites containing in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Washington County.
3. As is the case for the County's primary website, departmental public information staff will be responsible for the content and upkeep of any County authorized social media sites their department may use or establish.
4. All County authorized social media sites shall comply with all appropriate County policies and standards, including but not limited to:
 - a. Information Technology Services User Responsibilities Policy
 - b. Washington County Harassment-Free Workplace Policy
 - c. Washington County Privacy of Protected Health Information Policy

- d. Washington County Public Records Request Policy and Procedure
 - e. Washington County Media Response Policy and Procedure
 - f. Washington County Revised Personnel Rules and Regulations
5. County authorized social media sites shall comply with Oregon Government Ethics Laws (ORS Chapter 244) and County Ethical Standards (Washington County Personnel Rules and Regulations, Article 13).
6. County authorized social media sites are subject to the Oregon Public Records Law (ORS Chapter 192). Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to County business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, is a public record. The department maintaining the site is responsible for responding to any public records request for records created or stored on social media. Content related to County business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a request. Wherever possible, such sites shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure. Users shall be notified that public disclosure requests must be directed to the relevant departmental public records officer.
7. The Oregon Archives Division's records retention schedules (OAR 166-150-0005 to 166-150-0215) apply to social media formats and social media content. Unless otherwise addressed in a specific social media standards document, the department maintaining a County authorized social media site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to the relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a County server in a format that, as much as practicable, preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Appropriate retention formats shall be used for all forms of County authorized social media.
8. Users and visitors to County authorized social media sites shall be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between County departments and members of the public. County authorized social media site articles, comments and other content containing any of the following are not allowed:
- a. Comments and articles not topically related to the particular social media article being commented upon;
 - b. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures;
 - c. Profane language or content;

- d. Rude, disparaging or discourteous comments directed at specific individuals, groups, or organizations;
- e. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
- f. Inappropriate sexual content or links to inappropriate sexual content;
- g. Solicitations of commerce;
- h. Illegal conduct or encouragement of illegal activity, excepting any authorized undercover activities of law enforcement agencies;
- i. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- j. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party;
- k. Comments or content that harass or advocate harassment of another person;
- l. Comments or content that poses or creates a privacy or security risk to another person;
- m. Comments or content that contain restricted or password-only access pages or hidden pages or images (not linked to or accessible from another accessible page);
- n. Comments or content that involve the transmission of “junk mail,” “chain letters,” or unsolicited mass mailing, instant messaging, “spimming” or “spamming;”
- o. Comments or content soliciting or designed to solicit passwords or personal identifying information for commercial purposes;
- p. Comments or content involving commercial activities and or sales without prior written consent of the County, including but not limited to contests, barter, sweepstakes, advertising, or pyramid schemes; and
- q. Comments or content that includes a photograph or video of another person that has been posted without the person’s permission and consent.

These guidelines must be displayed to users or made available by hyperlink. Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available.

9. The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this Social Media Policy or any applicable law. County authorized social media sites that allow users to comment are limited public forums. Commentator's postings are subject to reasonable County rules and restrictions. County employees or agents acting as moderators are responsible for understanding and properly enforcing this Social Media Policy and any additional policies or regulations that apply to County authorized web accounts, sites, or pages.
10. The County will approve and address the use of County authorized social media tools as consistently as possible across the organization.
11. All new County authorized social media tools or accounts proposed for County use must first be registered within a County department or office.

The purpose of registration is to allow the County or a department or office of the County to immediately edit or remove content authored by the County, its employees or other users from all County authorized social media sites. Registration responsibilities will include maintenance of current login and password information for each social media tool or account used by the County.

Department directors or their designees will be responsible for working together with the Division of Information Technology Services' Chief Information Officer or the County Administrative Office Communications Officer to address violations of this policy, including the sharing of current user login and password information if necessary.

12. For each social media tool approved for use by the County, the following documentation will be developed and adopted:
 - a. Operational and use guidelines
 - b. Standards and processes for managing accounts on social media sites
 - c. County and departmental branding standards
 - d. Enterprise-wide design standards
 - e. Standards for the administration of County authorized social media sites

13. The following social media tools have been approved for use by the County:

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Blogs
- Other social media tools authorized pursuant to Section 11 of this policy.

Use of Social Media While on the Job

14. Employees should have no expectation of privacy while using County email addresses, computer systems, mobile devices, cell phones, or any other communications device used to access any type of social media. Employees approved to use County authorized social media sites while on the job shall abide by the following guidelines:

- a. All comments or content created by County employees using County authorized social media accounts or on community websites, accounts or blogs, while on the job, shall comply with all requirements of this policy and be professionally and ethically presented. Authorized County content authors must check facts, cite sources, avoid copyright infringement, acknowledge and correct errors, and check spelling and grammar before making a post live.
- b. Department directors may appoint one or more content authors who shall be responsible for coordinating and publishing content to County authorized social media sites or venues. In general, content authors should be the same employees who are trained as public information officers authorized to represent the County to traditional news media representatives. Department directors, in consultation with ITS, shall be responsible for developing and implementing procedures for reviewing content before posting and modifying, removing or prohibiting any messages or postings that the department or County Administrative Office deems to be in violation of the County's Personnel Rules and Regulations, this Social Media Policy, or any applicable private social media provider's terms of use.
- c. All blogs, list serves, websites, social media tools or accounts and Universal Resource Locators (URLs) must be registered within a County department or office. As appropriate, ITS shall provide departments with guidance for maintaining organization-wide consistency for each site's appearance. Exceptions to this approach must be authorized by the County Administrator or designee.
- d. On-the-job postings by employees are likely to be viewed by the public as expressions of the County government's point of view. Because County

authorized social media is directly related to the County's business concerns, employees are prohibited from expressing work-related complaints or criticisms on County authorized social media sites. Employees are encouraged to submit work-related complaints directly to the appropriate department or their supervisor or in accordance with applicable County policies. Nothing contained herein shall in any way be construed or applied in a manner that interferes with an employee's rights under the Public Employees Collective Bargaining Act.

- e. While the development of original content is desirable in many situations, County content authors are also encouraged to use existing text and language created and published to Washington County web pages whenever possible. This practice enhances the County's ability to underscore key messages and draw social media users to more extensive content found on County web pages.
- f. Discussion topics initiated by content authors must have a clearly identified topic or theme to assist users in staying on-topic.
- g. Employees who connect to social media sites using County-owned equipment, who are officially authorized to speak on behalf of the County or a department, or who may be perceived as speaking on behalf of the County or a department, are subject to all County policies and requirements regarding prohibited or inappropriate behavior in the workplace.
- h. Employees shall not make comments or posts on social media sites on behalf of the County or a department unless specifically authorized to do so by the County Administrator or a department director or their designees.
- i. Use of County authorized social media by employees during work time shall be in compliance with the County's Information Technology Services User Responsibilities Policy.

Use of Social Media on Personal Time

15. The County respects employees' ability to use social media as a medium of self expression and conversation, and this policy does not restrict an employee's ability to comment on matters of public concern as provided by law. However, social media sites have a significant communications potential, and can generally be accessed by anyone around the world indefinitely. Therefore, employees shall adhere to the following guidelines when communicating or posting content about County-related subjects on social media sites in their capacity as private citizens on personal time:

- a. Specify that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the County;

- b. Refrain from disclosing confidential or proprietary information of which the County may be a custodian including but not limited to private information about the County's citizens, customers, clients, elected officials, employees, representatives, business partners, service providers and vendors, and non-public operational information and procedures;
- c. Refrain from making statements that hinder the effective performance of County functions;
- d. Refrain from making comments that threaten physical violence, harass, bully, discriminate, or retaliate against the County's customers, elected officials, officers, employees, representatives, business partners, vendors, or service providers;
- e. Refrain from using social media to engage in abusive, defamatory, obscene, violent, maliciously false or otherwise egregious conduct or statements directed at or implicating the County, its citizens or customers, elected officials, employees, representatives, business partners, service providers, or vendors;
- f. Refrain from using social media sites in a manner that may damage or reflect discredit to the County's good reputation by posting content created, owned, associated with or held as a custodian by the County, including but not limited to intellectual property, trademarks, logos, copyrighted material, or images depicting County uniforms, vehicles, facilities, or other items identified with the County or its business partners;
- g. Refrain from linking a social media site to any of the County's internal websites or computer networks without County approval;
- h. Ensure that personal social media use does not interfere with assigned work responsibilities;
- i. Remember that, in some cases, content about the conduct of County business published by employees on personal time may be subject to disclosure under Oregon Public Records Law;
- j. Refrain from establishing websites or other social media sites of any type that purport to represent the interests and views of the Washington County organization or any of its departments unless the creation of such sites has been specifically authorized by their department director, the County Administrator or their designees; and
- k. Refrain from using any County email address to register on social networks, blogs or other online tools utilized for personal use.

Policy Enforcement

Violations of this Social Media Policy, including postings, comments or activities involving social media made on personal time that violate the County's Personnel Rules and Regulations or this Policy may subject employees to disciplinary action up to and including termination from employment with Washington County.

*Approved by the Washington County Board of Commissioners
May 7, 2013*