

PURPOSE

This document will provide guidelines for use of social media within the N.C. Department of Public Safety, in accordance with the North Carolina Office of the Governor's "Best Practices for Social Media Usage in North Carolina".

NCDPS recognizes the value of using social media, also known as new media or Web 2.0, as a way to communicate with stakeholders, media, its employees and the public at large. Tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others are rapidly changing the way information is exchanged and governments are expected to engage the public using these Internet-based channels.

This policy will establish the following: 1) NCDPS position on the use of social media as part of its communication and customer service strategy; 2) guidelines and expectations for development and use of social media services in an official capacity; and 3) guidelines for employee's personal use of social media.

These guidelines are applicable to NCDPS employees or contractors creating or contributing to blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds or any other kind of social media housed both on and off state-owned or operated servers.

Any employee or contractor who participates in social media in an official capacity on behalf of NCDPS must follow these guidelines. These guidelines will likely evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge, so any employee or contractor who participates in social media in an official capacity on behalf of NCDPS must regularly check this policy to ensure compliance with it in its current form.

Social Media Defined

Social media is loosely defined as the generation of Web design that facilitates shareable content, comments, community, collaboration and social networking. It consists of tools including but not limited to:

- I. Wikis;

- II. Blogs;
- III. Micro-blogs such as Twitter;
- IV. Social networking sites and platforms such as Facebook;
- V. Media sharing such as YouTube and Flickr;
- VI. RSS feeds; and
- VII. Podcasts.

NCDPS Position on the Use of Social Media

Social media is important because it is changing the way everyone communicates and works, much in the same way the Internet did in the 1990s. NCDPS supports social media use because:

- I. It provides a more direct way to reach constituents and stakeholders;
- II. It promotes transparency in government;
- III. It fills in the gaps left by the changes in traditional media; and
- IV. Government agencies are expected to communicate with the public in this manner.

Social media provides a new and dynamic way to interact with coworkers, other government agencies, stakeholders and the public. Used correctly, mindfully and with sound judgment, it can help NCDPS and its employees build stronger, more successful relationships with citizens, employees and other governmental partners.

Use of Social Media to Represent Divisions/ Offices/ Programs

NCDPS maintains official departmental social media sites and some of its subsidiary agencies also maintain their own separate social media sites. The Communications Office encourages subsidiary agencies to disseminate information by contributing to existing sites, as opposed to creating new social media sites. A few properly maintained sites that deliver consistently strong content are more effective than a diluted message delivered by a larger number of sites. Subsidiary agencies seeking to create new social media sites must have advance approval from the NCDPS Communications Office before launching a new site.

Creation and maintenance of all authorized social media sites will be conducted as part of a communications plan and strategy, as well as that of NCDPS.

The NCDPS Communications Office will:

- I. Oversee decisions regarding social media sites including authorization of new sites;
- II. Verify staff being authorized to use social media tools;
- III. Maintain a list of social media domains, active account logins and passwords for every social media account authorized in NCDPS; and
- IV. Change passwords when an employee is removed as an administrator to maintain agency control.

Once a social media site has been authorized by the NCDPS Communications Office, agency communication officers or PIOs must monitor the site's establishment, content creation and maintenance to ensure that the mission and message are being appropriately articulated.

At least two communications officers or PIOs from the communications office staff must have administrator rights on each NCDPS social media site.

NCDPS social media sites must allow for public comment on the sites to promote open government, transparency, dialogue between constituents and to take full advantage of the benefits of social media.

Preferred Social Media Tools

NCDPS will use the following preferred social media sites for outreach, marketing and overall public communication:

- I. Social Networking Platform: Facebook (government organization page; different setup than personal page);
- II. Video Sharing: YouTube;
- III. Photo Sharing: Flickr or Picasa;
- IV. Microblogs: Twitter; and
- V. Blogs: Blogger or WordPress.

(NOTE: This list is subject to change, as new products become available and as the technology evolves.)

Employees using social media to communicate on behalf of a NCDPS division or agency should be mindful that any statements made are on behalf of state government; therefore, employees must use discretion before posting or commenting. Once a comment or post is Made, it can be seen by anyone and cannot be “taken back.” Great care will be given to monitoring communication made on behalf of NCDPS using social media and improper use of social media tools can result in disciplinary action.

Professional Use Guidelines

- I. NCDPS related communication through social media outlets should remain professional in nature and should always be conducted in accordance with the agency’s policies and expectations.
- II. Creators, contributors and bloggers should stick to their area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what is going on at their divisions, and in other larger contexts.
- III. Posts should be meaningful and comments should be respectful.
- IV. Spam or offensive remarks are not permitted. Communication should not include any forms of profanity, obscenity or copyright violations. Site administrators should remove comments that violate these rules as soon possible after they are noticed.
- V. When a response is appropriate, comments will be responded to in a timely manner. A respondent should pause and think before posting a response. Generally, it is not appropriate to post personal opinions or discuss areas outside of one’s expertise on a NCDPS social media site. An employee should always consider whether it is appropriate to commit oneself or one’s agency to a course of action. If there is any question or hesitation regarding the content of a potential comment or post, it is better not to post.
- VI. Contact the Communications Office for guidance when responding to a sensitive or controversial post or when responding to comments that are critical of NCDPS.
- VII. Keep interactions appropriate and polite when it is necessary to disagree with others’ opinions on NCDPS social media sites.
- VIII. Proprietary information, content and confidentiality will be respected. Do not share confidential or non-public information.
- IX. Disclaimers addressing third-party ads and inappropriate content should be clearly visible on official sites where applicable.

- X. Employees must not use agency social networking sites for political purposes, to conduct private commercial transactions or to engage in private business activities. Employees should be mindful that inappropriate use of social media can be grounds for disciplinary action. If an account is used for business, the entire account, regardless of any personal views, is subject to these best practices guidelines, including the collection and preservation provisions.

Content Guidelines for Official NCDPS Social Media Sites

When creating social media accounts that require individual identification, an employee should use an actual name, not a pseudonym. However, using your actual name can come with some risks. Any employee using his or her name as part of NCDPS application of social media should be mindful of the following:

- I. Do not assume privacy. Only post information that you are comfortable disclosing.
- II. Use different passwords for different accounts (both social media and existing work accounts). Using the same password for all accounts increases the vulnerability of the accounts being compromised.
- III. A state employee should not use a current NCID password for any social media accounts, in to protect the operation and integrity of the state information network.

Public Record, Records Management and Preservation

- I. Communication through NCDPS related social media is a public record under General Statute 132 and will be managed as such.
- II. Comments or posts made to NCDPS division or agency account walls, forums or pages are public, not private. This means that both the posts of the employee administrator and any feedback by other employees or non-employees, are part of the public record.
- III. Because others might not be aware of the public records law, NCDPS social media sites shall include the following statement (or some version of it) somewhere on the social networking Web site:
 - “Representatives of North Carolina state government communicate via this Web site. Consequently any communication via this site is subject to monitoring and disclosure to third parties.”

- IV. In the spirit of transparency in state government, an account administrator who receives a message through the private message service offered by the social media site should encourage the sender to contact the account administrator at a public e-mail address maintained by the agency.
- V. If an account administrator receives a private message, it should be treated like constituent e-mail and therefore, as a public record. The account administrator or another authorized staff member should reply using a state e-mail account.
- VI. Privacy settings should be set to public.
- VII. The Communications Office will ensure that the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR) has current, updated lists of active account domain names of NCDPS social media sites so that DCR can collect and archive most social networking content using an automatic Web harvesting tool. NCDPS social media site administrators must not delete any information or communication threads before archival harvesting has been completed for a particular scheduled harvest.
- VIII. If the DCR notifies NCDPS Communications Office that DCR is unable to collect the content using the automatic harvesting capability, NCDPS must manually archive the public content without help from DCR. See Web Site Guidelines on North Carolina Government Records Web site (<http://www.records.ncdcr.gov/erecords/default.htm>).

Special Considerations

NCDPS understands that the cornerstone of a social media platform is interactivity, dialogue and the creation or building of community. However, when using social media, an agency should not engage in any activity that may create the appearance of any sort of endorsement of a private entity or business. Following a private business on Twitter, for example, could be construed as an official NCDPS endorsement of that business. Therefore any official NCDPS social media account shall refrain from following or liking a private business absent special permission.

Employee Use of Social Media

NCDPS recognizes that its employees may use social media on a personal basis outside of their professional activities and that such use may include the right to exercise freedom of speech.

However, NCDPS encourages its employees to use good judgment when posting to a social media site as a private citizen, especially if the employee refers to anything related to NCDPS business. Employees must be mindful that they could blur their personal and

professional lives when using social media. Even when acting away from the office in a private capacity, an employee must remember that he or she may be perceived by the public as representing the agency and state government as a whole when discussing NCDPS activities.

A NCDPS employee who posts work related information on a social media site is still subject to the terms of this policy. Employees must clearly label and distinguish a personal opinion when it is publicly stated about NCDPS related matters.

Personal Use Guidelines

It is recognized that many NCDPS employees have personal social networking sites. These sites should remain personal. Employees should not conduct NCDPS business by way of any personal account. This helps to ensure a distinction between personal and agency views.

Employees must not use their state e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking site.

Employees may use personal social networking for limited family or personal communications while at work. Those communications should occur on break times and must not interfere with their work.