

Clark County Social Media Policy

Effective Date: January 2, 2013
Revised: June 3, 2016

Purpose

This policy is designed to establish standards for use of social media by county departments to:

- Disseminate time-sensitive or emergency information as quickly as possible to a broad audience;
- Promote, announce and address county services;
- Provide additional means for the public to explore county government.

Scope

This policy applies to employees of departments that report to the county manager. It is recommended for employees of other departments. It applies to situations in which social media are used to distribute county information or perspective to external audiences.

Background

The Clark County website, www.clark.wa.gov, remains the county's primary Internet presence. Social media tools should serve a well-defined, mission-oriented purpose that adds to the information provided on the Clark County website. To that effect, social media tools should be tailored to specific audiences, evaluated for impact, and managed to keep information current.

1. Policies

- a. Requests to establish social media accounts must be made through the Public Information and Outreach (PIO) Office.
- b. PIO will maintain a list of social media tools available for county departments.
- c. PIO will maintain an inventory of all account information, logins and passwords. Departments must advise PIO of any changes to an account.
- d. Only employees designated by their department director (or equivalent authority) may post or delete content or comments to social media sites on behalf of the county.
 - a. Staff who post should be knowledgeable, have access to information, and be trained in social media protocol.
 - b. Posts should not contain comments or otherwise communicate about customers, coworkers, supervisors, Clark County officials or county vendors or suppliers in a manner that violates standard 2.a below.
- e. Departments must provide PIO with a list of all employees authorized to post on social media accounts for the county. All accounts must have at least two employees designated for posting and administering the account.
- f. Public response to information, to include posts and site visits, should be tracked in order to evaluate site effectiveness.

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- g. All sites should have an obvious link back to the county's official website (www.clark.wa.gov). Additional content should be useful and interesting, to include information that:
- People can apply to their lives or business right now.
 - Will help someone make a more informed decision.
 - Is relevant to the target audience.
- h. Employees authorized to post comments to county social media sites also may be designated to post comments on third party sites when necessary to correct misinformation or provide additional details that would improve public understanding.
- a. Misinformation should be captured and retained separate and apart from the third party site.
- i. Accounts may be closed when they no longer meet a business need. PIO must be consulted prior to closing a website.
- j. The county will monitor employee use of social media sites as with any other Internet activity under the county's Electronic Communications Policy (IS 2.01). Inappropriate use will be subject to discipline under Human Resources Policy Manual Chapter 13, Employee Standards.
- k. All county-approved social media pages will be governed by the county's Electronic Communications Standards Policy. (IT 2.01)
- l. Email accounts associated with social media sites will be separate email accounts designated and established by IT in accordance with IT policy 2.02-Email Services. In some cases, an employee county email or department email will be used. Employees must not use personal third-party email accounts to create social media presences for county business.
- m. Use of social media sites should comply with the terms and conditions, user agreements and/or other contractual agreement required by the site. Therefore, users must ensure that terms, conditions and agreements do not conflict with laws applicable to the county.

2. Standards

- a. The following content is prohibited on county social media sites:
- Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures.
 - Profane language or content.
 - 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.
 - Sexual content or links to sexual content.
 - Solicitations for private or personal gain or enterprises not related to county operations.
 - Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
 - Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public.
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- b. The county reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed a violation of this policy or applicable law.

- c. All communications between the county and members of the public are subject to public disclosure under RCW 42.56. This must be clearly displayed to all site visitors.
- d. Members of the Board of County Councilors or other policymaking boards and commissions should not comment or otherwise communicate with each other on social media sites in a manner that could constitute a violation of the Open Public Meetings Act.
- e. Social media sites should not include endorsements of private citizens, political groups, commercial activities or specific vendors. This includes “friending,” “liking,” “linking” or becoming a “fan” of commercial businesses, candidates for elective offices or campaigns for or against any ballot measures. The phrase “sharing and following does not equal endorsement” must be clearly displayed to all site visitors.
- f. Other government sites, non-profit entities and content providers may be mentioned and linked on the social media site but only to the extent the organization or content is directly related to county services or the conduct of county business.

3. Public Records

- a. All information posted to county social media sites is subject to Washington public records laws, including RCW 42.56 (public records disclosure) and RCW 40.14 (disposition of public records). A posting or comment is a public record if it has been made or received in connection with county business (full definition in RCW 40.14.010).
- b. Comments made by county staff on third party sites are considered original records and must be kept for the required minimum retention period in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible.
- c. Record retention requirements apply to all county social media content in all media formats including audio, video, images, graphics, data, text and public comments. The content must be retained in native format, using a county-approved archiving service, for the minimum period required by state retention schedules.
- d. All county departments using social media are responsible for capturing the records generated by their own activity to ensure the records will be adequately managed.
- e. Departments should consult with PIO to ensure consistent archiving procedures and notify PIO of any public records requests related to social media.