County of Monterey
Board Policy Manual

Policy Name	Policy Number	Page
Social Media Policy and Style Guide	O-70	1 of 13
Policy Category Operations and Maintenance		

I. Purpose

II. Background

III. Policy

IV. Procedure

V. Review Date

a. This Policy will be reviewed for continuance by November 7, 2027.

VI. Board Action

a. Legistar File Number: 22-1033, November 8, 2022.

Social Media Policy & Style Guide

1. Policy

The County of Monterey maintains multiple county-sponsored social media sites to provide communication on events and information important to those inside and outside the community. Management of those county-sponsored social media sites is governed by county policy entitled "Social Media Usage Policy O-70, dated May 13, 2014. The policy provides overall legal and policy guidance on the use of those social media sites by the public. Our Social Media Policy is reflective of County Values adopted by the Board of Supervisors and can be found on our website under the "Government" tab and then by clicking "Mission, Values & Goals." Here is a link for your reference: https://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/about/mission-values-goals.

Below are legal disclosures and terms of use governing content posted on county-sponsored social media sites in addition to what is found in the current published policy O-70:

In some cases, posts by the public may violate the county's standards for content on county-sponsored social media sites. Therefore, County of Monterey reserves the right to restrict or remove any messages or postings with the following content:

1. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination based on race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status regarding public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.

2. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, including, but not limited to infringement of a copyright, trademark or any registered mark.

3. Obscenity. The content, or any material contained in it, contains obscene matter or any other matter that is prohibited under the provisions of Chapter 7.5 (beginning with Section 311) of Title 9 of Part 1 the California Penal Code, and as such laws may be amended or supplemented. "Adult"-oriented goods or services. The content, or any material contained in it, promotes or encourages, or appears to promote or encourage, a transaction related to, or uses brand names, trademarks, slogans or other materials which are identifiable with, films rated "X" or "NC-17", video games rated "A" or "M," adult book stores, adult video stores, nude and/or topless clubs and other adult entertainment establishments, adult telephone services, adult Internet sites, and escort services.

4. Use of vulgar or threatening language.

5. Unlawful goods, services, behavior or activities. The content, or any material contained in it, promotes or encourages, or appears to promote or encourage, the use or possession of unlawful or illegal goods, services, and behavior or activities.

6. Violence. The content, or any material contained in it, contains an image or description of graphic violence, including, but not limited to: (1) the depiction of human or animal bodies or body parts, or fetuses, in states of mutilation, dismemberment, decomposition, or disfigurement, and (2) the depiction of weapons or other implements or devices associated in the advertisement with an act or acts of violence or harm on a person or animal.

7. Comments unrelated to the topic of the forum; hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion.

8. Spam or commercial promotions; content containing any unsolicited or unauthorized advertisement or solicitation (i.e., spam, junk mail, chain letters, pyramid schemes or other promotional materials).

9. Promotion or advertising of any businesses or commercial enterprises, unless they are providing support to County services.

10. Posts or links that contain malicious software (malware) such as viruses, worms, trojans, rootkits, spyware, adware or any other unwanted software.

11. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

All authorized social media platform administrators, editors, contributors, and content providers contact information must be provided to the County's Communications Program Director and the Director of County ITD. This includes all log-in credentials associated with each social media platform.

If a county social media account becomes compromised by a third party, that party can do significant damage to the county's reputation. Wherever available, county social media accounts must have two-factor authentication enabled. Two-factor authentication requires a username, password, and a one-time code or SMS text message normally sent to your phone. This is normally required only once for a new login on an unknown computer or smartphone. If a social media password is guessed or stolen, this makes it becomes far more difficult for the account to be compromised. Information on setting this up for popular social

media sites is available here https://www.tripwire.com/state-of-security/security-data-protection/the-value-of-two-factor-authentication-on-social-media/ .

The Countywide Social Media Working Group, upon receiving a request from County Communications Director or team, to make a specific post regarding an emergency situation, particularly important County news, and/or notifications relating to County accomplishments, should be made as follows:

> An **emergency** situation post must be made within one hour. A general priority news post should be made within one business day and the departmental social media contact person acknowledge receipt of all such requests.

All social media platforms must be listed on the County of Monterey's website under the Social Media tab.

This policy works in conjunction with and does not override existing (O-70) or new policies or agreements. The attached "Style Guide" is a supplemental document to this policy and as such should be treated in the same manner as the policy. However, the style guide is subject to regular change as best practices in social media continue to evolve. The style guide is not part of the policy in order to make updating more efficient and without having to go to the Board of Supervisors for routine updates.

2. Style Guide (supplemental document)

The County of Monterey's Communications Program office provides this social media style guide as a resource for how the County's social media posts should look and sound. The County will use the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook as the standard for writing, along with our house Editorial Style Guide. Here is a link to the Writer's Room for more information: https://writer.com/blog/a-comprehensive-guide-to-the-ap-style-of-writing/

For social media, however, style guidelines may differ. The following social media guidelines are to ensure consistency among social media postings representing the County of Monterey, Departments, Programs and Special Divisions.

For specific style questions not included in this guide, contact the Communications Team at PR@co.monterey.ca.us.

WHO WE ARE

The County of Monterey's social media voice should be authoritative, approachable, sharp and engaging. Additionally, whenever possible your department/program messaging should also be shared in Spanish, especially in time of crisis or an emergency. Your content should always take into consideration the literacy level of your target audience/s. Our social media platforms help tell the County's story and reflect the County's Mission, Values and Goals of providing outstanding services to the residents, businesses, and stakeholders. In addition, to support the work of our elected officials in a holistic and equitable manner.

ACCOUNTS: (this is the current directory of all platforms by department, see the attached Excel spreadsheet)

Facebook:

Instagram:

Twitter:

YouTube:

Snapchat:

TikTok:

Next Door:

OWNERSHIP

All social posting is to be conducted with the approach explained above. We don't attach names or initials to posts to specify who is posting.

MANAGING COUNTY SOCIAL ACCOUNTS

Social media is a tool that can create meaningful connections with residents, businesses, visitors, partners and other members of the community. County of Monterey social media accounts should tell our story while developing and maintaining these connections. Social media accounts related to County departments should follow guidelines outlined here and, in our Identity, Guidelines located on SharePoint, our digital asset management tool.

REQUESTING SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS*

All social media accounts must be approved before a department/program creates a new account. The County Communications Team approves new social media accounts for the Department's offices.

Any department, site location or program that wants to create a new social media account must fill out the social media request form.

Each official social media account (both new and already existing) must have a primary contact who is responsible for passwords; onboarding, training, and offboarding employees who have access to that account; and sharing County social media guidance. The contact must be a full-time, permanent employee. Official accounts must have a backup contact who fills in when the primary contact is unavailable or on leave.

If contractor staff are intended to help manage an official account, then the creation or writing of content (i.e., posts, tweets, etc.) must be done by the County point of contact for that account, or by another County employee. If the contractor wants to write the post, it should be reviewed by the County point of contact before being posted. Contractor staff need to get their content approved since they are not considered official representatives of the

Department, Bureaus or Programs and are not able to speak on behalf of those organizations.

Any social media account that has not been approved via the official approval process may be terminated.

Before starting a new social media account representing a county department, contact County Communications Director for a consultation. We look forward to helping you create a complete profile with a plan for engagement. Be sure to think on the following questions: Who is your audience? What is your content? What are your goals with the account? Who is responsible for this account?

Social accounts representing the County should be created using a county email account. Facebook accounts can be linked to existing personal accounts.

For posts, you can utilize images created by your department or program that comply with all legal, copywrite, and liability policies established by the County Counsel's Office or that are found in our SharePoint photo library. (Library of photos has been created and is live on SharePoint with specific departmental folders.)

*Adapted from a source document from the U.S. Federal Government https://www.doi.gov/employees/dmguide/website-and-social-media-basics

COPYRIGHT

Follow all copyright and intellectual property laws when posting to any social network. Do not, under any circumstances take photos off the internet.

Link to release forms here (approved by the Board of Supervisors Policy G-145)

NETWORK-SPECIFIC BEST PRACTICES

Facebook

- Delete the text URL from a post if displaying a link preview.
- Use line breaks.
- Avoid the use of hashtags.

Twitter

- If beginning a tweet with an @, put a period before the handle to avoid it becoming a reply rather than a tweet.
- Create a thread to relay more information.

Instagram

- Do not use links in Instagram captions. Instead, post the information as a story and include a link or use the caption to direct users to a link in the profile's bio.
- Do not use images that appear unnatural, and do not edit images to appear unnatural.
- Be informative and concise in captions.
- Avoid using text-heavy images.

YouTube

- Add a thumbnail image.
- Feel free to add tags to make your video more visible to browsers.
- Add a description for your video.

STYLE GUIDE BEST PRACTICES

Accessibility

- Alt Text: Provide descriptive alternative text for images. This allows those who are unable to see the image to know what the image depicts. This text also contributes to search engine rankings. Strong alt text should be descriptive, succinct and accurate.
- Captions: Most social media users are more likely to watch a full video if it includes captions. Be sure to include closed captions or burn the captions on your video using a service like Kapwing or a subscription to Adobe Premiere Pro. For Instagram videos, captions are available through the caption's sticker in Instagram Stories.

Acronyms

- COM is acceptable on all references and should always be capitalized.
- For, departments, programs, or special divisions, consider using the full name on the first reference before switching to acronyms.

- Capitalize when referring to members of the County community.

cross posting

- Not every post should be included on every platform. For example, a post that is targeted at County Employee Groups may not be the best content for Facebook or Twitter. Think about creating separate content calendars for each platform to make the most of your digital presence.

dates/times

- The AP Style provides these abbreviations of months: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.
- Abbreviate days of the week: Mon., Tues., Wed., Thur., Fri., Sat., Sun.
- Use a comma to set off the year when using full dates: *She was born Sept. 15, 1985, in Los Angeles.*
- *Do not add "nd," "st" or "th" to a date.*

deleting posts and comments

- Deleting comments and posts should be rare. Social media platforms are considered public forums under the First Amendment. Any deletions must be content neutral. Comments expressing profanity or hate speech (speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation) may be deleted, as may other categories enumerated in the policy below. If in doubt whether a comment may be deleted, please consult County Counsel.
- If something requires clarification, think about using the comment section or send a private message to a user. If you require a management consultation, please use internal email or Teams.

emojis

- Use emojis sparingly and thoughtfully, both because of style and accessibility. Use of emojis should match the voice of the account and the content of the post.
- Take advantage of online glossaries of emojis such as Emojipedia.

GIFS

- We encourage you to use County-related GIFS (under development expected in the 2nd quarter of 2023)

hashtags

- Use County of Monterey-specific hashtags when possible. Examples include: #CountyofMonterey
- Avoid using hashtags that do not have a clear purpose. Avoid vague hashtags such as #County, #CentralCoast, #Services, or #Government (these are just example of vague #).
- For clarity and accessibility for screen readers, always CamelCase hashtags with capital letters for each word, i.e.: #CamelCaseHashtags.

imagery

- Use high-resolution photos or videos for posts.
- Place photo credit at the end of the post.
- County Emblem and Logo usage and color variations should be consistent with guidelines outlined in the Communications Toolkit's Identity Guidelines, located on the CAO's Communications Program SharePoint site. https://uca.netx.net/portals/brand/ - login

links

- Shorten links with services like Bitly for a better experience to users.

memes

- While enjoyable, content should remain County of Monterey centric.

mentions

- When active County of Monterey Department or program-related accounts are related to the subject of a post, reference those accounts when possible.
- Give credit to submitted photos.

mobile use

- Be mindful when creating posts from your phone. To avoid typos and errors, review your post carefully and, if possible, get a second eye before posting.

point of view

- To make content more engaging, use the "we" perspective as often as possible. (Example: *Congratulations to our graduates! We honor your accomplishments.*)

titles

- Never abbreviate. Lowercase after a name but capitalize Supervisor… as a conferred title before a name: *Supervisor Jane Doe.* Titles are not necessary after the first reference.
- Follow the AP Style Guide regarding title information.

punctuation

- Limit the use of an exclamation point. Use an exclamation point to express excitement and friendliness.
- Only capitalize the first word after a colon if what follows the colon is a full sentence.

QR Codes

- There are many differing opinions regarding posting QR codes on social media. The County Communication Team has no issues with using QR codes on social media as we are observing many larger organizations and corporations utilizing them. There are naysayers that believe QR codes are not an effective tool for social media. Using links instead is perfectly acceptable and is a best practice.

quantity

- Best practices dictate to be consistent. Post regularly on a platform.

replies/interacting with users

- Respond to questions and concerns regularly and in a timely manner.
- Do not initiate or participate in personal attacks.

reposts/retweets

- We encourage you to follow all other County of Monterey Department, Program, and Special Division accounts and retweet their content when possible.
- Prior to retweeting or sharing posts from any outside source, examine the account to ensure it's appropriate.

scheduling

- Typically schedule posts two weeks in advance are industry best practices. This will give you time to prepare content in advance and set it and forget it.
- Be prepared to remove scheduled posts at the first sign of crisis or emergency. In the event of either, there is not messaging more important than providing the public important critical information.

trending topics, community events and holidays

- This can be an effective tool to drive engagement but be sure to keep your content Monterey County centric.
- Think about what your audience needs to see from your page. Avoid what seems to be random gimmick holidays that don't relate to your mission.

sunsetting a social media account

- Audience and user behavior moves rapidly, and as a communicator, you need the flexibility to move and put your resources where they will make the most impact online. Here are some steps to close, or sunset, a social media account.

step 1: Do a full assessment.

Ask yourself – are we just talking to ourselves on here? Where online is our audience doing the talking? Did we just start this account to snag our user name? If your answers are "yes," "not here," and "probably" (in that order) you might need to consider shifting your priorities. The most important question you need to answer is where are your people having conversations online so you can meet your audience where they are. That will help you decide what channel to focus on. If you are running a campaign that will become dated or lack relevance in a few months or a year, you should consider archiving your posts by utilizing a 3rd party social media archiving service.

step 2: Leave a bread crumb.

It is not advised to delete an account because you want to remain in ownership of the handle. Instead, make a final post that says where your group will be online and pin it to the top. This way, fans can find where you are active.

step 3: Don't lose the login!

You might not be active now, but you never know if you may need access to the account again. Be sure to put the password, email and phone number attached to the account in a secure place that can be passed on to future staff and Communications Team.

guidelines for public comments (adapted from the U.S. Government*)

We encourage and welcome public comments. However, we expect that this be done in a respectful manner, and the County retains the discretion to determine which comments violate our social media policy. We also reserve the right to hide, remove, and/or not allow comments to be posted.

We do not discriminate against any views, but we reserve the right to hide or delete comments that contain:

- Misleading or false information, including links to sites containing misleading or false information
- Personally identifiable information, such as Social Security Numbers, home or business addresses, e-mail addresses, or phone numbers;
- Threats of harm or violence
- Profanity, obscenity, or vulgarity, including images of or links to such material
- Nudity in profile pictures or images shared in comments;
- Defamation to a person or people;
- Name calling and/or personal attacks;
- Comments whose main purpose are to sell a product or promote commercial websites or services;
- Comments that infringe on copyrights;
- Spam comments, such as the same comment posted repeatedly on a profile.

  Do not engage in arguments or debates from an official County account(s). Responding factually to substantive questions is OK, but engaging in policy debate is not.

    - Be Transparent – disclose your affiliation
    - Cite Your Sources – stick to facts and cite your sources by including hyperlinks, video, images, etc.
    - Respect Your Time – do not spend more time than the response is worth
    - Use a Professional Tone – Respond in a tone that reflects positively on the County
    - Unsure of your response, or of how to respond? Contact your Department Director, County Communications, or County Counsel

Repeated violations of the County's social media policy may cause the author to be blocked. Consult County Counsel in these instances.

Reasonable comments, questions, or requests for information regarding County services should be addressed as soon as possible.

*Adapted from a source document from the U.S. Department of the Interior Website and Social Media Basics