
Representing EPA Online Using Social Media Procedure

Directive No: CIO 2184.0-P03.2

*Issued by the EPA Chief Information Officer,
Pursuant to Delegation 1-19*

Representing EPA Online Using Social Media Procedure

1. PURPOSE

This Procedure provides the steps and principles that EPA employees, contractors, and other personnel who are authorized to use social media on behalf of EPA must adhere to when representing EPA online. For purposes of these procedures, “social media” is the sharing of information through virtual networks and communities.

2. SCOPE

This Procedure applies to EPA employees, contractors, and other personnel who are authorized to use social media on behalf of EPA.

This procedure does not apply to EPA employees using social media tools for personal use while using government-owned office equipment; such use is covered by the EPA CIO Order 21010.3 A12, “[Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Policy](#).”

This procedure does not apply to EPA employees using social media in their personal capacities; however, employees are always required to follow the [Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#) and the [Hatch Act](#).

This procedure does not supersede or replace existing legal responsibilities and policies in effect.

3. AUDIENCE

The audience for this procedure includes any EPA employee, contractor (under direct supervision of an EPA employee) or other personnel who are authorized to use social media on behalf of EPA, and those who help create content for EPA's social media accounts.

4. AUTHORITY

CIO 2184.1, [Social Media Policy](#)

5 C.F.R. 2635 [Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch \(as amended at 81 FR 81641\)](#) (effective January 1, 2017)

5. PROCEDURE

When employees, contractors, other personnel who are authorized to participate in social media activities on behalf of EPA as part of their official duties, they are representing the agency. They should exercise the same decorum and professionalism that they would if they were speaking on EPA's behalf at a conference or public meeting.

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When representing EPA online in an official capacity, we are the agency's representatives and the same approval considerations, and ethical principles apply.

- Employees must obtain their supervisor's approval before representing EPA online and must not speak on behalf of the agency in areas that are outside their assigned duties.
- Any content posted by agency employees acting in their official capacity should be properly sourced.

Examples of representing EPA online include, but are not limited to, writing posts for EPA's social media accounts, moderating comments on EPA's social media accounts, or participating in live events or pre-recorded videos.

Steps for representing EPA online in an official capacity:

1. **Represent EPA generally and your office specifically.**
 - It is important that you remember that you are participating in your official capacity and not in your personal capacity. Make sure that your online activities and shared content while you are officially representing EPA are consistent with your job responsibilities at EPA.
 - If you see errors online about EPA that are not in your area of expertise or you are not authorized to represent EPA in regard to the subject matter, pass them on to someone who is an expert in the area or who is authorized to represent EPA in regard to that issue. If you do not know who to contact, please consult with your supervisor or the Office of Public Affairs (OPA).
2. **Obtain necessary approvals consistent with the [CIO 2184-P-02.2 Using Social Media to Communicate with the Public Procedure](#).**
3. **State facts, not opinions.** When representing EPA online, do not engage in discussions of opinion about EPA's programs, because promoting ourselves instead of focusing on facts could be construed as propaganda or lobbying.
4. **Identify supporting sources.** If a link to a supporting source is available, then provide that information so that others can access it. Supporting references may include EPA webpages and other materials including documents, video, or audio files; offline bibliographical references are second-best. Supporting references can also include those written by EPA partners.
5. **Protect nonpublic information.**
 - Be thoughtful about what you publish online.
 - Do not disclose or use nonpublic information.
 - If you would not say something offline or include it in a written letter, do not post it online.

For more information about nonpublic information refer to [Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch](#), specifically 5 C.F.R. 2635.

6. **Ethics apply, even online.** As an EPA employee, you are bound by the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch.
 - Do not use your public office or EPA position, title, or authority for private gain. Pay attention to the rules about misuse of position.
 - Do not misuse government property or government time.
 - Do not divulge nonpublic information, which includes any information that is exempt from disclosure that is designated as confidential or has not actually been disseminated to the public and is not authorized to be

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- made available to the public upon request.
 - Abide by the [Hatch Act](#) and do not lobby.
 - Contractors must follow contracting rules.
- Simply put, behave professionally, responsibly, impartially and above all ethically, and with your supervisor's approval. More information about [EPA Ethics Program](#).
7. **Maintain records when applicable.** Agency records created or received using social media tools must be managed according to the applicable records schedule in a recordkeeping system. More information about records and social media can be found at [EPA Records Management Program](#) and Section 5 (Maintain Records) of the Using Social Media to Communicate with the Public Procedure.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Information Officer/Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Mission Support (OMS), and **the Associate Administrator** of the Office of Public Affairs (OPA) are jointly responsible for monitoring compliance with this procedure.

Office of Mission Support (OMS) applies the requirements of this procedure in its functions of providing appropriate agency-wide web technology services and security, policy, guidance, and technical assistance to program and regional offices. OMS develops policy and procedures for social media use in consultation with OPA.

Office of Public Affairs (OPA) applies the requirements of this procedure in its functions of managing communications and product review, specifically the Office of Web Communications (OWC). OPA also collaborates with the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to establish Terms of Service agreements with third-party sites in consultation with OMS. OPA develops and posts social media awareness guidelines and tools in conjunction with OMS.

Office of General Counsel (OGC) provides legal guidance relating to the web, reviews and approves terms of service, and oversees ethics requirements for EPA employees.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG) will adhere to the Social Media Policy to the extent that it is not inconsistent with the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, or with the policies, procedures, and guidelines established by the Office of Inspector General.

Senior Information Officials (SIOs) serve as the primary point of accountability for the effective oversight, coordination, and management of information and information technology (IT) within their respective organizations and are responsible for ensuring that their office is in compliance with EPA's Social Media Policy, procedures and supporting documents.

Information Management Officers (IMOs) support their respective SIO in implementing the SIO's information technology and information management functions and responsibilities.

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[Communication Directors](#) in program offices are responsible for the requirements of this procedure in their functions managing communications from their organizations, including the review and approval of social media content for programmatic social media accounts and the web.

[Public Affairs Directors at regional offices](#) are responsible for the requirements of this procedure in their functions for managing communications for their organizations, including the review and approval of social media content for regional social media accounts and the web.

Social Media Leads are responsible for working with their respective regional and program offices to discuss appropriate social media usage for that office in accordance with OPA and OMS web policy and web practices.

Agency Privacy Officers are National Program Managers for the Agency's National Privacy Program. Agency Privacy Officers develop agency level privacy policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines; lead agency efforts to protect PII; provide direction and oversight of the agency's privacy responsibilities; report to the Senior Agency Official for Privacy and the Office of Management and Budget on privacy compliance and administration activities.

Information Security Officers (ISOs) are designated by the Assistant Administrator (AA), Regional Administrator (RA), Inspector General (IG), or General Counsel for their respective organizations. The ISOs ensure that information resources under their purview are managed and protected appropriately. The primary role for ISOs is to ascertain that a current information security program is in place for their respective organization and that the information is properly managed from an information security perspective.

Records Liaison Officers (RLOs) are responsible for overseeing a records management program in a headquarters or field office in cooperation with the agency records management officer.

Regional and Program Offices provide quality content and appropriate infrastructure and resources to communicate the agency's work and mission on the web. Regional and program offices may provide additional procedures and guidance as needed to meet their respective priorities, provided they do not conflict with those that apply to the agency as a whole. Ultimate accountability for regional and program areas on the web is at the most senior level, typically at the Assistant Administrator or Regional Administrator level.

7. RELATED INFORMATION

[CIO Policy 2184.1, Social Media Policy](#)

[CIO 2184.1-P02.2, Using Social Media to Communicate with the Public Procedure](#)

[Requirements for creating, customizing, and maintaining web products on the agency's public access and intranet servers](#)

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[CIO 2101.1, "Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Policy,"](#) August 10, 2020

[Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. Part 2635](#)

[All design requirements for EPA public webpages](#)

[Current Information Directives - CIO Policies, Procedures, Standards, and Guidance](#)

[Checklist of Requirements for Federal Websites and Digital Services](#)

[Social Media Ethics FAQs](#) found in the Social Media Resources section of the EPA Web Guide.

[EPA Comment Guidance](#) found in the Social Media Resources section of the EPA Web Guide.

[Interacting with EPA Online](#) disclaimer found in the Policies and Procedures section of the EPA Web Guide.

8. DEFINITIONS

Disclaimer - A statement that limits or specifies rights or obligations. In many instances you will need to include the standard disclaimer that views expressed are opinions and not official agency policy. Another often-used disclaimer is the standard exit disclaimer when you include a link to an outside website.

Records - Include all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them. Library and museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and of processed documents are not included. (Source: 36 CFR 1220.14)

Social Media - The sharing of information through virtual networks and communities.

Third-party website – For purposes of this procedure, any website that is not owned, operated or co-sponsored by EPA. Refers to sites as a whole; EPA accounts on such sites are still third-party, even though EPA controls the content of those accounts.

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9. WAIVERS

There are no waivers from this Procedure.

10. DIRECTIVE(S) SUPERSEDED

CIO 2184.0-P03.1, Representing EPA Online Using Social Media, June 20, 2011.

11. CONTACTS

For further information about this Procedure, please contact the Office of Web Communications, Office of Public Affairs.

***Vaughn Noga, Chief Information Officer and Deputy Assistant Administrator
for Information Technology and Information Management***