

Imperial County Social Media Policy & Guidelines for Official Accounts



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I. Record of Updates

This policy and guidance is a living document that will evolve continually and be edited and updated as new technologies and social media sites change. Refer to this record of updates section for the latest changes.

- February 7, 2017: Policy approved and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors.
- September 26, 2017: Policy amended, Section VIII & Appendix C, by the County Board of Supervisors

II. Objective

To maintain the integrity of the County's social media presence and to ensure that social media is used appropriately and adheres to County guidelines and policies.

III. Purpose

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents and businesses communicate and obtain information about the County of Imperial (the "County") online, the County's departments/agencies may use social media tools such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Nixle, and Flickr to reach a broader audience. While the County's website (www.co.imperial.ca.us) is the County's primary Internet presence, the County recognizes that, when used appropriately, social media may be useful in furthering the goals of the County and the missions of its departments.

The values of social media for the County are to:

- Increase the County's ability to publish, engage and provide customer service with relevant, timely and useful information while promoting core services and key events.
- Establish our voice to build confidence that we are a trusted source for information, especially during emergencies.
- Use social media during public emergencies and emerging incidents to share critical information with the public and to use in combination with other public information strategies such as traditional media, Reverse 911, Public Service Announcements, etc.

The County has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "announced" or "spoken" on behalf of the County on social media sites. This policy establishes

guidelines and procedures for the use of social media. All official County presences on social media sites or services are considered extensions of the County's information networks and are governed by the responsibilities set forth in this and related policies and procedures (such as the Information Technology Security Policy). Violations of this policy shall be considered misconduct and may result in discipline up to and including suspension/termination.

IV. Definitions

Social Media – Internet-based technology communications tools with a focus on immediacy, interactivity, user participation, and information sharing. These venues include social networking sites, forums, blogs, online chat sites, and video/photo posting sites or any other such similar output or format. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Nixle, and Flickr.

County Social Media Sites – Those pages, sections, or posting locations in social media websites established or maintained by an employee of the County authorized to do so as part of the employee's job and to communicate with the public about County matters.

Social Media Administrators/Publishers – County employees expressly designated by their department directors/heads to maintain oversight of their department's social media sites. A social media administrator's authority is limited to actions that directly reflect guidance from the social media administrator's departmental director/head and that comply with the policies and procedures of the social media administrator's department and the County.

V. Applicability

This policy applies to all County employees and designated volunteers, interns, contractors, service providers and consultants performing business on behalf of a County department/agency.

County departments/agencies using social media technology prior to the implementation of the County's Social Media Policy and Guidelines are subject to review by the County's Public Information Officer (PIO) and shall achieve full policy compliance within 120 days of the effective date of this document.

VI. Responsibilities

- A. Each department director/head is responsible for implementing the provisions of this policy and related duties that include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Requesting to establish an official County departmental social media site as stated in Section VII, Subsection A of this policy.
 - ii. Submitting a request for approval of site(s) established prior to implementation of this policy in accordance with Section VII, Subsection A of this policy.
 - iii. Developing the engagement framework for posting information and responding to comments.
 - iv. Designating a social media administrator/publisher for their department to manage day-to-day operations of a social media site in close consultation with the department director/head, or a designee.
 - v. Ensuring the social media site is regularly updated and monitored.
 - vi. Serving as the lead contact for a requested/established social media account.
 - vii. Adhering to policies.

- B. Each departmental social media administrator/publisher is responsible for oversight of the department's social media tools and shall:
 - i. Review social media sites or tools established by their departments, in collaboration with the department director/head, to ensure that they are in compliance with this policy.
 - ii. Ensure the social media sites are regularly maintained and kept current.
 - iii. Review information posted to the department's social media sites to ensure the content is appropriate, professional, and consistent with the County's policies and is consistent with the purpose of the site. Frequent review of sites that provide opportunity for comment or other interaction is essential.
 - iv. Keep the department's director/head informed of the department's social networking tools and activities.

- C. The PIO provides the umbrella framework for the county's social media presence. In this role, the PIO will:
 - i. Oversee and confirm decisions regarding social media sites, including authorization of sites.
 - ii. Evaluate requests for usage (such as "Applications for Approval of Social Media Site/Tool" including "Work Plans" submitted by department directors/heads).
 - iii. Maintain a list of social media domains, active account logins and passwords.

- iv. Change passwords if the designated administrator is replaced in order to maintain departmental control.
- v. Serve as a silent administrator of all accounts.
- vi. Manage the County's YouTube account.
- vii. Coordinate posts and updates during emergencies.
- viii. Help post, if needed, due to the absence of an administrator.
- ix. Provide feedback and coordinate training.
- x. Provide new guidelines as social media programs change.
- xi. Amplify presence and information through countywide accounts.
- xii. Request and/or publish messages to all or select social media accounts.

D. Information & Technical Services (ITS) will work with the PIO to create, monitor, and track the County's social media presence. In this role, ITS will:

- i. Create an account and/or page for the agency/department. The social media accounts will be registered with a County email address.
- ii. Maintain a list of social media domains, active account logins and passwords.
- iii. Serve as a silent administrator of all accounts.
- iv. Coordinate posts and updates during emergencies.
- v. Enable access to websites that publishers need to maintain a social media presence for their respective departments.

VII. General Governance and Oversight of County Social Media Sites

A. When a County Department decides to use a form of social media that is deemed beneficial to its mission it shall request approval by submitting a Social Media Site Proposal and Work Plan in accordance to the application provided in Appendix A to the County Executive Officer, or a designee. When considering establishing a social media presence, it's important to consider goals, objectives, audiences, differences between social media sites and tools, and connections to other County departments and agencies. The purpose of the Work Plan is to ensure proper adherence and compliance with the Social Media Policy and Guidelines.

B. County social media sites may contain information that represents or appears to represent the County's position on policy issues or other matters affecting County business and/or the positions of County leaders. Thus, the PIO has general oversight of all County social media sites. In disaster or emergency situations, all social media content must be coordinated with the PIO, in accordance to the guidelines set forth in Appendix B.

- C. County departments/agencies may not create their own social media sites. If approved, the PIO, in conjunction with ITS and the requesting department, will create pages with proper settings, look and feel to ensure consistency; transfer administrative rights to the agency; and ensure that the director/head, managers and staff selected to administer the sites receive training.
- D. Several social media tools have been approved for the County and standards have been developed for their use. Contact the PIO for a list of approved tools and the standards that have been created for each tool. These standards will also be reviewed with the departmental social media administrator/publisher, after the department's site proposal has been approved. It is preferred that departments/agencies launch one platform at a time.
- E. County departments and agencies may request to participate in all social media platforms, except for YouTube. There will be one YouTube channel for all County departments, agencies, and programs that will be managed by the PIO from a centralized account.
- F. The PIO and ITS will continuously evaluate social media opportunities. County departments/agencies are required to work with the PIO if there is interest in pursuing new tools. Contact PIO@co.imperial.ca.us with proposals. Beta tests can be approved with a requirement to produce a six-month status report.
- G. Only County staff will serve as social media administrators/publishers. Volunteers, interns, contractors and board/commission/committee members are not eligible to administer official accounts.
- H. Persons responsible for maintaining County social media sites shall provide each administrator's access, login, and password information to the following: their departmental director/head, ITS, and the PIO. Any changes in administrator access, login or password information must be reported immediately to all such personnel.

VIII. Design and Content of County Social Media Sites

- A. Design elements should be appropriate to the subject matter.
- B. Departments will use proper grammar and avoid slang, if possible. Social media tools are often more casual than most communication tools but all County social media shall represent the County appropriately and professionally.

- C. County social media sites must contain a link to the County’s website (www.co.imperial.ca.us) and the County departmental website for more information, forms, documents or online services, as necessary. Agencies must use a link shortener to meet the requirements of character-limited platforms. .
- D. County social media sites must contain a link to their departmental “Terms of Use” that has been approved by the County Executive Officer, or designee. The “Terms of Use” serves as a disclaimer to address the use of the department’s social media site. The “Terms of Use” shall also contain a clear statement of the purpose and subject matter of the department’s social media site.
- E. The following statement, or a similar disclaimer that is approved by the County Executive Officer, or designee, shall be included in each department’s “Terms of Use” that will be available in the county and departmental websites:
- i. [Insert name of department/agency] is a [department, agency, or program] of the County of Imperial. This site is intended to serve as a mechanism for communication between the public and [department, agency, or program] on the listed topics. Following or “friending” persons or organizations is not an endorsement by the County and is only intended as a means of communication. All content of this site and all comments submitted to this page and its list of fans are public and are subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act. Public information requests must be directed to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors.
- F. External links to media articles or other relevant content are permitted on County social media sites to encourage conversation and to share information.
- G. All content-sharing activities, such as video-sharing, shall be suitable, appropriate, and consistent with the County’s policies.
- H. The County’s social media sites must be structured narrowly to focus on information dissemination associated with the County. All comments shall be disabled unless otherwise authorized by the County Executive Officer.
- I. County social media sites need to be clear, precise and follow industry best practices for posting updates. Three tenets County social media administrators/publishers must follow regarding the types of content to share:
- i. Relevant: Information that helps residents and pertains to their daily lives.

- ii. Timely: Information about deadlines, upcoming events, or related to current events.
- iii. Actionable: Information to register, attend, go or do.

J. Content that County social media administrators/publishers shall not post on County social media sites include:

- i. Nonpublic information of any kind; always check with your manager or PIO if unsure.
- ii. Personnel, sensitive or confidential information of any kind.
- iii. Medical information that violates a person's medical privacy rights such as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protections.
- iv. Information that violates County policies or ordinances and/or federal, state and local requirements.
- v. Information that is proprietary, subject to the attorney-client privilege or state or federal privacy laws, and information not subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

K. Department social media administrators/publishers shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with this directive and consulting with the departmental director/head or PIO, when necessary. Legal requirements and county guidelines towards the protection of confidential, sensitive, and internal use information still apply.

L. Images posted to social media must comply with copyright infringement. Do not use images from internet sites without researching copyright protection first.

M. Refer to the Photo/Video Release Form in Appendix C when posting images that were obtained at a private event, meeting or activity.

N. Social media content such as embedded tweets, Facebook posts or YouTube videos may be placed on County web pages. Social media content from select partners such as the state or federal government may be embedded. The PIO reserves the right to use any County department/agency social media content on the County web page, social media sites and other platforms.

IX. Public Records

The County's social media sites are subject to the California Public Records Act and Proposition 59, amending Article 1, Section 3 of the California Constitution. Any content maintained in a social media format that is related to County business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication (with certain exceptions), is a public record.

The Department maintaining the site is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any request for public records on social media; provided, however, such requests shall be handled in collaboration with the County Clerk of the Board and County Counsel. 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 articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting may be or are subject to public disclosure upon request. Users shall be notified that public records requests must be directed to the relevant department's director/head or designee.

X. Archives and Retention

California law and relevant County records retention schedules apply to social media formats and social media content. Unless otherwise addressed in a specific social media standards document, the department maintaining a site shall preserve records required to be maintained pursuant to a relevant records retention schedule for the required retention period on a County server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible. Retention may be accomplished by keeping them online, moving them to an offline repository or printing and filing hardcopies at the discretion of the office.

Social media responses need to be retained by the department maintaining the site for the required retention period on a County server in a format that preserves the integrity of the original record and is easily accessible by the department maintaining the site.

If an agency is using social media to explicitly collect feedback, that agency must take steps to ascertain the appropriate retention period and retain such records for at least that period of time.

XI. Security

Passwords to social media sites should be changed at a minimum of every 6 months. In the event of a compromise, or suspected compromise, passwords should be changed immediately. The PIO and ITS should be informed whenever a password is changed, as they will keep documentation of every agency page's account information. An Imperial County official email address should be used to establish an official social media site when possible. Credentials to County social media sites should be protected and limited to authorized personnel.

XII. Related Policies

Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and county laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to established laws and policies regarding use of county electronic resources, copyright, records retention, California Public Records Act, First Amendment, federal and state privacy laws, and Imperial County human resource regulations and information security policies.

Violation of these standards may result in the removal of agency social media sites or disciplinary actions against specific publishers. The PIO and ITS who oversees information resources and technology retains the authority to remove pages.

XIII. Appropriate Employee Use of Social Media

Imperial County uses official social media sites to communicate information as outlined in Section II of this policy. Only those employees with administrative access and training may express official county positions or speak as the county through a government social media account. Authorized publishers will have access to social media at work and must adhere to various information technology, human resources and department protocols.

XIV. More Information

If you have questions about this policy, contact the PIO at PIO@co.imperial.ca.us. Contact ITS with concerns about security and employee usage.

APPENDIX A

Application for Approval of Social Media Site/Tool

Social Media Site Proposal (SMSP) and Work Plan

Pursuant to the County’s Social Media Policy and Guidelines for Official Accounts, a Social Media Site Proposal and Work Plan must be completed for each type of social media site/activity, and must be submitted to the PIO for the CEO’s final approval or denial. While the County’s website (www.co.imperial.ca.us) is the County’s primary Internet presence, the County recognizes that, when used appropriately, social media may be useful in furthering the goals of the County and the missions of its departments.

Date: _____

Your name: _____

Your department/agency: _____

Type of social media communication (Twitter, Facebook, etc.): _____

Name of proposed page: _____

Statement of purpose (Why do you want this social media site? / What objective(s) do you want to achieve with the site?): _____

Audiences (primary, secondary): _____

Audience needs, concerns, interests: _____

Desired action for each audience (awareness, attitude formation/ reinforcement/ change, action): _____

Strategy to publicize the site: _____

Means for establishing authenticity (“official” page): _____

Process for reviewing and responding to comments or disabling the comment feature: _____

Privacy policy: _____

Records retention procedure: _____

Exit strategy (outline triggers for deactivation of an account): _____

Social Media Administrator(s) (name, title, and email address): _____

Social media staff assignments and reporting structure: _____

Expected time commitments: _____

Training for managers, supervisors, and staff assigned to manage the site:

APPENDIX B

Emergencies and Emerging Incidents

During emergencies or evolving incidents, all social media content and postings must be coordinated with the Public Information Officer to ensure that communications are managed appropriately. Depending on the incident, publishers may be directed to point to specific social media sites that will serve as the main source(s) of information. All incidents evolve over time and the County may need to change how social media assets are being used from strategic and tactical perspectives.

There are generally two scenarios when social media needs to be coordinated:

1. Joint Information Center Activations

Publishers will be notified by email of Joint Information Center (JIC) activations and deactivations. Between the start and end time of a JIC, please contact the PIO by sending messages to PIO@co.imperial.ca.us, not individual staff members as staff shifts will vary. The PIO may direct that select agencies staff social media.

2. Emerging Issues and Incidents

When an issue or incident emerges in our community, an official JIC may not be needed. However, close coordination for all communications, including social media, is still required. Use the email address listed above in these cases as well.

Specifically, here's what social media administrators/publishers need to be aware of when a JIC is activated or notification is made that social media efforts must be coordinated:

1. PIO/ITS May Publish From Department Accounts

The PIO and ITS reserves the right to post messages on any county social media account as the incident progresses. If publishers are actively working an incident, the PIO will attempt to notify. If publishers are not actively working an incident, the PIO will proceed to reach your audience.

2. Unschedule Posts

Unschedule any posts so content is not insensitive or untimely due to whatever the emergency situation may be in our community.

3. Important Publishing Guidelines

Keep these publishing tips in mind for effective execution of social media:

- A. Try to timestamp any time-sensitive information so it's clear when it was published. Use a template such as: "3/17, 10:33 am: (message here)"

- B. Please share (including tagging the County's official page) or retweet county information to fans/followers as needed. This is the best method to ensure message consistency.
- C. Be aware of hashtags on Twitter or created by the PIO. Please include it in tweets if space permits.
- D. Content published on social media must be usable, especially to people on mobile devices. For example, provide links to webpages, not PDFs.

4. New Social Media Sites to Support Emergencies

The PIO also reserves the right to establish new social media sites as needed.

APPENDIX C

Photo/Video Release Form

Photo/Video Release Form

Photo/Video Release Form Date: _____

Program: _____

I voluntarily and irrevocably give my permission for my child/myself (print name) _____ to be photographed and/or videotaped by an Imperial County ("County") government representative, agent, employee, or assignee to use my name and photograph, still image, sketch, video, film, motion picture, image, digital file, sound recording and/or any other such reproduction of my person or voice in any form whatsoever (collectively "copies of my likeness" in publicizing the above mentioned program in print or electronic media. I acknowledge and agree that my participation in photographs and videos may be edited, modified, and may be produced, duplicated, distributed and used for any purpose the County deems appropriate.

I also acknowledge and agree that photographs and video taken by Imperial County government representatives of me may be used in county government publications, on the county Web site, and/or in the County YouTube page. I understand that photographs become the property of Imperial County without compensation to me. I also understand that any photographs may be subject to the California Public Record Act.

I hereby release and forever hold harmless the videographer/photographer, CEO's Office, the County of Imperial, and their representatives, agents, employees, and assigns from any liability, claims, allegations, demands or causes of action brought by me, my heirs, representatives, agents, third parties, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate, relating to the use of said copies of my likeness, including but not limited to claims of violation of any right of publicity or privacy, and/or libel or defamation by virtue of any blurring, distortion, alteration, optical illusion, or use in composite form, whether intentional or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the taking of copies of my likeness or in any subsequent processing of them, as well as any publication of them. I hereby waive any right of privacy associated with copies of my likeness and waive any right to inspect or approve prior to use.

I have read, understand and approve this Photo/Video Release Form.

Signed _____

(Signature of parent or legal guardian if person in program is under 18 years of age.)

Print Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Formulario de Autorización para Publicación de Fotografías/Videos

Fecha de publicación de foto/video: _____

Programa: _____

Por medio de la presente, manifiesto que de forma voluntaria e irrevocable doy mi consentimiento y autorización para que le puedan ser tomadas fotografías y/o grabaciones en video o audio a mi hijo (a), y al suscrito (escribir nombre en letra de molde) _____ por representantes gubernamentales, agentes, empleados, ó persona designada por el Condado Imperial (Condado) y estén en posibilidad de usar mi nombre, fotografía, imagen fija, bosquejo, video, imagen en movimiento, imagen, archivo digital, grabación de voz, ó cualquier otra reproducción de mi persona ó voz en cualquier forma (colectiva “copias de mi imagen” en publicar el programa previamente mencionado en imprenta ó por medios electrónicos. Igualmente, declaro y autorizo estar de acuerdo que mi participación en fotografías ó en videos pueda ser editada, modificada, producida, duplicada, distribuida y usada por cualquier propósito que el Condado considere adecuado.)

De la misma forma, declaro y autorizo que las fotografías ó videos tomados respecto a mi persona puedan ser utilizados por los representantes gubernamentales del Condado Imperial en publicaciones del Condado, como lo es en su página de Internet o YouTube . Asimismo, declaro y manifiesto que es de mi conocimiento y entender que las fotografías y/o videos son propiedad del Condado Imperial y no habrá ninguna retribución económica para el suscrito. Igualmente, declaro y manifiesto que es mi más leal saber y entender que las fotografías pueden ser sujetas a la Ley del Registro Publico de California.

Por lo anterior deslindo y exento de forma definitiva y de responsabilidad alguna, al camarógrafo/fotógrafo, la Oficina del Ejecutivo del Condado (CEO), al Condado Imperial y sus representantes, agentes, empleados ó designados de cualquier, reclamo, denuncia, demanda, ó causa de acción presentada por mí, mis herederos, representantes, agentes, terceras partes, ó algún otra persona actuando en mi nombre ó bajo la representación de me sucesión en relación con el uso de dichas copias e imágenes de mi persona, incluyendo pero no limitado a reclamaciones de violación de algún derecho publico o de privacidad, y/o injuria o difamación en virtud de cualquier desenfoque, distorsion, alteración, ilusión óptica, o uso en forma de compuesto, ya sea intencional o de otra forma, que pueda ocurrir o ser producida en la toma de copias de mi semejanza o en cualquier procesamiento de estas, asi como publicación de estas. De la misma forma, renuncio a cualquier derecho de privacidad asociado con copias de mi imagen y persona, asi como cualquier derecho de inspección o aprobación antes de su uso.

Declaro haber leído, entendido y aprobado este Formulario de Autorización para Publicación de Fotografías/Video.

Firmado _____

(Firma de padre o tutor si la persona es menor de 18 años de edad.)

Nombre en letra de molde _____

Dirección _____

Ciudad _____ Estado _____ Código Postal _____