

Social Media Guide

Government agencies have to decide for themselves whether or not to use social media. This guide highlights concerns that arise with the use of social media and suggests policies/procedures to ensure that agencies using such platforms comply with Oregon Public Records Law.

Are social media posts considered public records?

Posts that are made on an official public agency account, or on a private account that is being used to distribute information for that agency to the public, are considered public records.

What is the retention period for social media posts that are records?

The retention period for social media varies depending on the post. Agencies should consult their Records Retention Schedule for appropriate retention periods.

What about comments from members of the public on an agency's page?

Comments and posts put on an agency's account by members of the public or other outside entities are not automatically considered to be records, unless those comments trigger some action by the agency. For example, if a resident comments on the City Public Works' page that a pothole needs fixing and the City then corresponds with the resident or takes action to fix the pothole, then that comment is a public record.

Can agencies moderate their social media pages?

Agencies are permitted to moderate their social media pages, but need to be clear about criteria and publicly post the moderation policy on all accounts. Agencies are not required (for records management purposes) to maintain inappropriate comments or inflammatory language being posted by members of the public, but having a log of the reasons behind the banning can help protect the agency. Agencies may also disable comments on their page or individual posts.

How does an agency capture record content from its social media accounts?

The way an agency captures record content is less important than making sure that the critical record information is captured and maintained appropriately. Most social media outlets do not automatically allow account holders to download their activity logs, so it is important to consider ahead of time how posts will be preserved. This also applies to private message received over social media accounts.

See suggestions for capturing content and how to deal with private messages in the full [Social Media Best Practices](#) guide.

Questions? Contact the [Oregon State Archives](#)