

CITY OF HARLINGEN'S SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



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1. City of Harlingen Social Media Policy

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and responsibilities regarding the authorized use of social media by City of Harlingen Departments. These standards ensure that City employees using social media tools are compliant with existing policies and legal requirements. Personal use of City social media outlets by City employees is prohibited.

The City would like to supplement its public relations efforts and increase communication methods with its citizens through the use of social media avenues. This policy applies to all City of Harlingen sponsored events and use of social media sites and to all City employees, approved volunteers, consultants, service providers and contractors performing business on behalf of the City who use social media for City events, business and other informational purposes.

1.3. Policy Overview

In order to increase the methods in which residents communicate and obtain information online, City departments are encouraged to use social media to reach a broader audience, streamline processes, enhance communication, collaboration, information exchange, promote City events and assist in dissemination of information to the public.

Additionally, the City supports the use of social media to further the goals of the City and its mission statement: "Ensure a business-friendly climate focused on economic growth, quality of life and efficient delivery of excellent services to our community." Use of social media must not compromise data confidentiality and integrity and must be done in a manner that is in good taste and is not offensive to our citizens.

Approved social media sites for City business, but are not limited to: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Google Plus, Instagram, Flickr, Vine, Snapchat and Tumblr.

2. Policy and Guidelines

Departments use of social media technology shall conform to the guidelines, responsibilities, and procedures contained or referenced in this policy.

2.1. General Guidelines

- 2.1.1.** Each official City social media site(s) or service is considered an extension of the City's information networks and is governed by City policies, including e-mail, Internet usage and applicable Personnel Policies.
- 2.1.2.** Department Heads utilizing social media will review, approve and monitor all use of social media for their departments. Official use by the department of social media services is ultimately the responsibility of the Department Head.
- 2.1.3.** Department Heads utilizing social media will review, approve and monitor all use of social media for their departments. Official use by the department of social media services is ultimately the responsibility of the Department Head. Employees may only post or otherwise manipulate the data on the City's social media with the express approval of their Department Head.
- 2.1.4.** Employees who publish to social media in the scope of their work for the City are acting as representatives of the City via social media and accordingly must conduct themselves at all time in accordance with City policies and the Social Media Policy. Employees who fail to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- 2.1.5.** Departments must keep, in a secure place and manner, an updated list of all user names and passwords associated with the Department's official social media accounts. The Department Director shall be responsible for giving all user names and passwords for each account to the Management and Information Systems (MIS)

Director. It is important for the Department to have access to each account at any time in case of the unavailability of the person(s) who normally maintain each account, and the Department's designated users are required to update the Department with login information.

2.1.6. Departments should never "follow", "like", or link to political campaign sites. Departments may retweet, follow, like, share, and/or comment on posts by elected officials unless doing so would appear to endorse a political candidate or campaign. Departments should also not use social media to take positions regarding political issues that are pending before the Harlingen City Commission and should avoid "following" or "liking" partisan sites that take positions on candidates or campaigns (including but not limited to other social media sites).

2.1.7. Departments that use social media are responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, county and city laws, regulations, and policies. This includes adherence to established law and policies regarding copyright, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), privacy laws, and information security policies established by the City. These guidelines attempt to address the most common concerns.

2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.2.1. MIS Director - The Director is responsible for periodically reviewing these guidelines and presenting any revisions needed to management. To periodically check with Department Heads to make certain the MIS Department has the most current login information for each social media account. To assist Departments establish social media accounts only when authorized by the Department Director and City Manager and to provide training on posting information to approved social media accounts.

2.2.2. Department Heads - Have the ability to establish (with City Manger approval) and terminate social media sites/use at the department level. They shall also be responsible for monitoring social media sites

within their departments for ensuring the appropriateness of content, compliance with Social Media Policies and established City policies as well. Department Heads must also establish who will have access to the site for inputting and updating information to the established sites. Only City of Harlingen employees shall be given access to social media accounts established for official city use.

2.2.3. City Employees and Volunteers - No employee or volunteer shall under any circumstances utilize the City Logo on their personal social media sites.

3. Social Media Networks

Departments shall only utilize City approved social media networks for hosting official content from the City. Approved sites are listed on Section 1.3.

3.1. Approved Social Media Networks - New social media networks under consideration that are not listed in Section 1.3 will be reviewed and approved by the City Manager with guidance from MIS, Human Resources and Legal Departments.

3.2. Authenticity - Departmental social media sites shall have the City logo to distinguish the site as an official City social media site. Use of the City logo on non official City sites or personal sites is strictly prohibited. Contact information should display an official City e-mail address, references to personal e-mail addresses as the contact information is prohibited.

3.3. Site Content - Department Directors are responsible for establishing and maintaining content posted to their respective social media sites and shall review site activity daily for exploitation or misuse.

3.4. Updating Account Content - Departments should monitor accounts regularly to update the sites as appropriate. Sites should be updated to include information for upcoming events, meetings, festivals, concerts or general information the Department Director deems appropriate to provide. Departments that provide emergency and support services during an emergency situation shall provide updates to the public on their social

media sites regarding precautionary measures the public should take before and during the emergency. Those departments that provide these services that do not have access to social media sites shall provide the information on the City's Web Site. If assistance is needed uploading the information to the Web Site, the Department Director should contact the MIS Director for assistance.

Acceptable forms of content include, but are not limited to: text; video and photographs; graphics and hyperlinks.

3.5. Unacceptable Content - Content may be removed from Social Media sites that violates this section of the Policy. The following are examples of content that are prohibited and shall be removed from the site:

- Profane language or content.
- Explicit sexual or harassing content including likes to such content.
- Violent or threatening content.
- Solicitation of commerce, commercial activities, fund-raising or sponsorship.
- Illegal activity.
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Political activities by City employees.
- Personal information about employees.

3.6. Content Deletion - Unacceptable content should be removed as soon as possible. A copy of every deleted item must be retained. The following can be used to warn individuals whose content has been removed, about their posts.

"Your recent post is in violation of the City of Harlingen's Social Media Policy. The City reserves the right to remove, hide, or block such content. As a result, your recent post violated this Policy and your post was removed. Please refrain from posting similar content in the future. Thank you for your understanding."

Removing or blocking an individual from future posting on social media sites is not recommended. Departments should consult with Management who will ask for a legal opinion on blocking an individual if the postings are habitual.

Tagged material that has a hash-tag with a link to a Twitter account, Facebook page, etc., should be monitored by the department to ensure appropriateness. If the tag violates this policy the Department Director shall remove the tag promptly.

4. Social Media Guidelines for Employees

4.1. Guidelines for City Employees who use Social Media for City Business

Employees with the City who are required to use social media for City related business, including managing a department's use of a social media site in their official capacity, are required to comply with the following guidelines.

4.1.1. Your are Responsible for What You Publish. You are responsible for the content you publish on your department's social media site. Be mindful that what you publish will be public.

4.1.2. Stick to Your Area of Expertise. For example, if Planning receives a question about Public Works on their network, it is not appropriate for Planning to answer the question since it's not the department's area of expertise. Instead, the employee should direct the question to the appropriate department and notify the individual their question was forwarded to the appropriate department.

4.1.3. Commenting on other Social Media Sites about Department Business. During the course of City business, it may become necessary

to publish City content on other social media sites. For example, publishing a comment on an upcoming City festival on another festival social media site. When this becomes prudent to further City events, approval from the Department Director must be obtained before the comments may be posted. Posting City business or commenting about City issues on non related social media sites is prohibited.

4.1.4. Protect Confidential Information. Do not provide your department's confidential information or other protected information.

4.1.5. Prohibited Content. Employees are prohibited from using ethnic slurs, personal insults, or obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. It is generally inappropriate for the government to take a stand on political or religious issues.

4.1.6. Use the Social Media Site to Contribute to Your Department's Mission. Refer to Section 1.3 for the City's Mission Statement. When you contribute to your department's social media site, provide worthwhile information that contributes to the mission of serving the public by:

- Helping you and your co-workers better perform your jobs;
- Informing citizens about relevant information, government services and how to access services, events, and festivals;
- Encouraging civic engagement and participation.

5. Guidelines for City Employees Who Use Social Media Outside of Work

Whether or not a City of Harlingen employee chooses to create or participate in a blog, wiki, online social network or any other form of online social media outside of the workplace is his or her own decision. These guidelines have been created to address some of the choices that individual employees, contractors, consultants or volunteers may face using online social media sites.

5.1. Employee's conduct. While an employee's use and comments made on social media sites are subject to First Amendment protections, employees are not permitted to engage in off-duty conduct that impacts the performance of their duties or that reflects unfavorably on the City.

5.2 Employee's personal use must not be attributable to the department, City, or employee's job function at the department. Any personal use made of social media sites outside of work must not be attributable to the department, City or employee's job function at the City. The following is a non-exhaustive list of prohibited conduct:

- Employees may not use a work e-mail address to register for social media or other sites unless the purpose is directly related to the employee's job.
- Employees may not display the City of Harlingen logo or other official emblems or patches on personal social media/networking accounts.
- Employees may not represent, imply, or permit the perception that the employee speaks for the City, department or elected officials.

5.3. Protect your privacy. Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other social media site. The City of Harlingen is not responsible for the personal content of your social media site(s). Be mindful that what you publish may be public for a long time.