

PROCEDURE MANUAL 19-12



MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

Social Media Content Guidelines

Purpose: This procedure manual establishes standards and best practices for the creation, management, security, and moderation of department social media accounts to ensure consistency, accessibility, transparency, and compliance with State of Michigan (SOM) policies.

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Definitions:

Account Owner: A member designated by the department who is responsible for the administration, content oversight, monitoring, and compliance of an official department social media account.

ArchiveSocial: The State of Michigan–approved social media archiving system used to capture, retain, and retrieve deleted or edited content from official State of Michigan social media accounts, excluding Nextdoor.

Blocking: An action that prevents a user or page from viewing, interacting with, or engaging with a department social media account.

Banning: An action that permanently restricts a user or page from accessing or engaging with a department social media account due to violations of applicable platform Terms of Service or Community Engagement Guidelines.

Burned-On Captions: Text permanently embedded into a video file that displays spoken dialogue and relevant audio information to ensure accessibility.

Community Engagement Guidelines: State of Michigan standards governing acceptable public interaction on official State of Michigan social media accounts.

Department Social Media Account: Any official social media account authorized, created, or maintained by the department for public communication or engagement.

Direct Message: A private, non-public communication sent between users through a social media platform’s messaging feature.

Host Site Terms of Service (TOS): The rules, conditions, and requirements established by a social media platform governing use of that platform.

Muting: An action that limits a user’s ability to interact with or be visible on a department social media account without fully restricting access.

Non-SOM Generated Content: Content created by individuals or entities outside the State of Michigan and posted, shared, or commented on official SOM social media accounts.

SOM Generated Content: Content created, posted, or published by the State of Michigan or its departments on official SOM social media accounts.

Social Media Account: An online account used for social networking, content sharing, or public engagement on platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Threads, and Nextdoor.

User-Generated Content: Comments, posts, photos or videos created by members of the public.

Section 1: Social Media Governance

1.1 Social Media Policy and Account Access

- a. Before being granted access to manage a department social media account, members must review all State of Michigan (SOM) social media standards, policies, guidelines, and training documents provided by the Communications and Outreach Division (COD).
 - i. After review, an [employee certification form](#) must be signed and submitted to the State Digital Content Administrator at the Department of Technology Management and Budget (DTMB).

1.2 Community Guidelines

- a. Department social media accounts are moderated channels, meaning all comments will be reviewed for appropriate content. Since these sites are not monitored 24/7, anyone seeking emergency assistance or reporting a crime should be directed to dial 9-1-1.
- b. The department reserves the right to remove user generated content or comments that violate the [State of Michigan Social Media Customer Use Policy](#), following the content removal procedures noted below.
- c. Account owners are expected to respond to legitimate questions related to the department's mission that are posted on department social media accounts or received via direct message through department social media accounts.

1.3 State of Michigan Style Guide

- a. Account owners shall follow the State of Michigan's Style Guide (available from the COD):
 - i. Agency logos must be displayed as the page profile image.
 - ii. Account usernames and account URLs should clearly identify the agency/program.
 - iii. All account bio, descriptions and profile information should be completed in full.
 - iv. Official migov social banner must be displayed as part of the cover image.
 - v. Official michigan.gov websites must be listed as part of contact information.
 - vi. Efforts should be taken to have consistency across all social media channels.

1.4 Blocking, Banning, or Muting Users

- a. The SOM uses social media to expand traditional channels of constituent engagement. With a goal to increase transparency, enhance the customer service experience and improve communication, collaboration and information exchange with the public, the SOM does not endorse "blocking, banning, or muting" users or pages as general practice.
 - i. Exceptions to this practice may be granted if users or pages violate the host site Terms of Service (TOS) or the [Community Engagement Guidelines](#). The SOM Community Engagement Guidelines are available to the public at mi.gov/socialmedia.
- b. If an account owner blocks, bans, or mutes a user or page on SOM social media, they must have a business case to do so.

- i. The business case should include why action was taken against the user or page and should clearly document the violation of the site TOS or [SOM Community Engagement Guidelines](#).
 - ii. Account owners are responsible for maintaining records on all blocked, banned, and muted users or pages.
- c. In the event a user is blocked, muted, or banned, the following information shall be sent to [COD](#) for documentation:
- i. Name of user(s) blocked, muted, or banned
 - ii. Date
 - iii. Applicable TOS or [Community Engagement Guidelines](#) the user violated
 - iv. Supporting documentation, including screenshots where possible

1.5 Content Removal and Archiving Guidelines

- a. Account owners are responsible for monitoring content posted on their respective SOM social media accounts. When content requires removal, the following process must be followed:
 - i. Non-SOM generated content may only be removed from SOM social media accounts if it is in violation of the host site TOS or the [Community Engagement Guidelines](#), and the account owner can articulate the violation(s) that require removal.
 1. When non-SOM generated content is removed from a SOM social media account or page, it is recommended that the content owner be notified. It is a best practice to share the [Community Engagement Guidelines](#) to explain why the action was taken.
 - ii. If SOM generated content is removed from a SOM social media account, the account owner must archive the removed content.
 1. The department uses ArchiveSocial to capture all deleted and edited content on all social media accounts, with the exception of Nextdoor.
 2. For Nextdoor, the account owner must send the following documentation to [COD](#):
 - a) Screenshot of deleted post
 - b) Date
 - c) Any additional information on why the post was deleted
 3. To minimize the need for edits, account owners are responsible for reviewing content before posting for accuracy, correct spelling, etc. Posts can be edited up to two times on the same device it was posted. X posts must be edited within an hour of the original post.

Section 2: Content Guidelines and Best Practices

2.1 Content Posting Frequency

- a. Account owners shall actively post content and engage with the public Monday through Friday during SOM business hours. Recommended posting frequencies by platform are listed below:

Channel	Posting Frequency
Facebook	1-2 times per day
X (Twitter)	2-3 times per day
Instagram	1-2 times per week
LinkedIn	2-3 times per week
Threads	1-2 times per week
YouTube	As determined by content strategy. Should include monthly posts to maintain activity on account.
Nextdoor	3-4 times per week

2.2 Best Practices for Who to Follow

- a. Account owners should consider the value of liking and following a specific account or page before doing so. The public may interpret a like or follow as an endorsement of that account or page and the content posted there. As such, the below guidelines shall be followed.
- i. The following accounts may be followed:
 1. State of Michigan departments and agencies
 2. Local, state and federal public safety partners
 3. City, county or township government pages
 4. Community organizations that regularly work with the department
 5. Educational or safety organizations that share relevant, reliable information
 - b. Be careful to only follow official government institution accounts, not personal or campaign accounts of political figures. For example, it is appropriate to follow official accounts such as the White House or POTUS. It is not appropriate to follow personal, political, or campaign accounts operated by individual elected officials, such as "Donald J. Trump," "Joe Biden," or similar public figure accounts.
 - i. Do not follow:
 1. Partisan, campaign, or political accounts
 2. Controversial or advocacy accounts not aligned with the department's mission
 3. Personal accounts of employees or individuals
 4. Any account that could imply endorsement of a product, service, or political viewpoint

2.3 Best Practices for What to Reshare

- a. Resharing content reflects the voice of the department, so all re-shares must support the department's mission and provide value to the people we serve.
 - i. Content may be reshared that is:
 1. Directly related to public safety, community well-being, or emergency information
 2. From verified government agencies or reliable partners
 3. Relevant to Michigan law enforcement operations or statewide initiatives
 4. Helpful for public education, safety awareness, or community engagement
 - ii. Do not reshare content that is:
 1. Partisan, political, or advocacy-based
 2. Inaccurate, unverified, or based on opinion
 3. Sales, products, or promotions
 4. Off-topic, misleading, or not connected to the department's mission
- b. When in doubt, ask a supervisor before resharing content.

2.4 Content Creation Best Practices

- a. Highlight important posts by pinning these to the top of the page timeline.
 - i. Aim for posts to be 20 percent business/structured and 80 percent conversational.
 - ii. Use relevant keywords to make content easy to search for.
 - iii. Use common SOM or content related hashtags. Avoid using excessive hashtags in content posts. Reference the [SOM Social Media Common Hashtag Guide](#).
 - iv. Avoid trending hashtags that have no relevance to the site's brand or that have not been fully vetted.
 - v. On X, subscribe to the official SOM X Account from @migov list at [X.com/i/lists/66697229?s=20](https://x.com/i/lists/66697229?s=20)
 - vi. Search and follow professional accounts that share similar content. Content generated and published on all SOM accounts must follow acceptable use of IT Resources under SOM 1340.00.01 Acceptable Use of Information Technology including abiding by all intellectual property laws. Downloading, duplicating, or distributing copyrighted materials without specific written permission of the copyright owner is not allowed. Users shall respect all licensing agreements.
 - vii. Content published or shared should be relevant to the department.

2.5 Nextdoor Best Practices

- a. Nextdoor is a neighborhood-focused platform, allowing for government agencies to share important updates directly with verified residents in specific geographic areas. The approach used on Nextdoor should be different from the approach used on X.
- b. Nextdoor is best used for “need to know” information that directly impacts local residents. It is not intended for every announcement or general content that appears on X.
- c. Types of content to post:
 - i. Public safety alerts (AMBER Alerts, avoid areas)
 - ii. Community and recruiting events
 - iii. Crime prevention (trends, scams, ongoing activity)
 - iv. Traffic and roadway notices
 - v. Seasonal safety tips
 - vi. Polls
- d. Best practices:
 - i. Be consistent with regular updates
 - ii. Keep posts timely, informative and relevant
 - iii. Encourage two-way communication and respond to users who comment
 - iv. Avoid political or promotional content
 - v. Localize content from district to county levels when appropriate
 - vi. Always follow up to close out posts when a situation is resolved (road closure / road opened)

2.6 Video Creation Best Practices

- a. These tips will help create simple, effective videos for department social media channels.
 - i. Shoot for the platform
 - ii. Use the correct orientation for the platform.
 1. Portrait (vertical) for X, Instagram Reels, and Facebook Reels.
 2. Landscape (horizontal) for YouTube and longer-form content.
- b. Always Use Captions
 - i. Captions are required for every video to make content accessible to all audiences. See more under “Section 4: Making Content Accessible”
 - ii. Burn captions directly onto the video so they appear on every platform. Burning captions into a video means the text is permanently added to the video file itself. The captions appear on the screen no matter where the video is posted or how the viewer

watches it. Viewers cannot turn these captions on or off because they are part of the video. This ensures accessibility, helps people who watch with sound off and keeps the message clear across all platforms.

- c. Pay Attention to Audio
 - i. Avoid wind, traffic, and loud background noise whenever possible.
 - ii. Move closer to the subject if the audio is weak.
 - iii. Check the microphone or phone audio before filming.
- d. Keep It Short and Engaging
 - i. For short-form videos, aim for 10 to 30 seconds.
 - ii. Start with the most important or eye-catching content to capture attention immediately.
 - iii. Avoid introductions or slow transitions, as these can cause viewers to stop watching.
- e. Get Close to the Action
 - i. Move physically closer to the subject rather than zooming in.
 - ii. Steady the shot by holding the phone with both hands or using a simple tripod.
 - iii. On most phones, the AE/AF Lock (Auto Exposure and Auto Focus Lock) can be used to keep the subject sharp.
 - 1. To use it, press and hold on the subject on the camera screen until the AE/AF Lock indicator appears. This prevents the camera from constantly refocusing or changing brightness while recording.
- f. Use Good Lighting
 - i. Film with light in front of the subject, not behind.
 - ii. Avoid harsh shadows or bright backlighting that hides faces.
- g. Check the Background
 - i. Look for clean, uncluttered backgrounds.
 - ii. Avoid anything distracting or not suitable for an official government account.
- h. Stay Safe and Professional
 - i. Never film while driving or in unsafe locations.
 - ii. Make sure uniforms, equipment and scenes reflect department professionalism.
- i. Review Before Posting
 - i. Watch the full video before uploading.
 - ii. Check for clear audio, correct spelling in captions, and appropriate framing.

2.7 Links

- a. When appropriate, provide links to websites for additional information.
- b. Common web directs:
 - i. MSP Careers: michigan.gov/MSPjobs
 - ii. Reporting suspicious activity: michigan.gov/MICHTIP
 - iii. Newsroom: michigan.gov/MSPnewsroom
 - iv. MSP Posts: michigan.gov/MSPposts
 - v. Mobile App: michigan.gov/MSPMobile
- c. Keep in mind that all URLs once entered in X become 22 characters long and count toward the 25,000 character limit.

2.8 Hashtags

- a. A hashtag is not necessary for every post. If using a hashtag, one or two is recommended, and rarely more than three should be used. Always research a hashtag's meaning and who is using the hashtag before using it.

2.9 Innovation

- a. If appropriate, participation in social media campaigns is encouraged. For example, participating in #DriveSoberOrGetPulledOver when the campaign is running.

2.10 Account Security

- a. To reduce the likelihood of the account being compromised, the use of a strong account password is required. Additionally, the password should be changed every quarter and/or when a member with access leaves the worksite or department. Upon changing the account password, send a courtesy notification to [COD](#).
- b. If it's suspected that a SOM social media account has been hacked, immediately contact the platform's Support to submit a support request. Additionally, send a courtesy notification to [COD](#).

2.11 Holidays and Observances

- a. In developing social media content and other communications messaging, the department seeks to employ a thoughtful approach to recognizing various awareness, heritage, state holidays, and religious observances that reflect the rich diversity of Michigan.
- b. The intent is to be as inclusive as possible while also not confounding the department's social media channels with so many observances that its primary purpose of sharing public information is diluted. Wherever possible, the ultimate goal is to connect these observances to the work the department does, so that the relevance of both is advanced.
- c. For more information, read the [Inclusive Communications Guidance](#) for holidays and observances posted on department social media channels.

Section 3: What to Avoid Posting

3.1 Screenshots of Documents

- a. Do not post news releases or other documents as images. Screenshots of text-based documents are not ADA-compliant. Instead, copy the body of the release and paste it into the body of the post. Long-form posts on X are preferred over threads feature.

3.2 QR Codes

- a. Do not include QR codes in graphics created for social media. QR codes are appropriate for physical posters and digital signage in physical locations, but they are not effective on social media, where most users are viewing content on a mobile device and cannot scan the code. In addition, QR codes embedded in social media graphics do not meet WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards, as the content they link to is not directly accessible to users of assistive technology. If a QR code is received to post, post the URL the QR code is linking to instead.

3.3 Flyers

- a. Avoid posting text-heavy flyers or posters as main feed posts. Instead, create simple graphics with a fun illustration or a related photo. Include all necessary information (including title, date, time, location, sponsor department names if necessary, etc.) in the text box.

3.4 Booking Photos

- a. Per department social media policy, do not post booking photos on social media. Posts cannot be deleted if the subject is found not guilty in court.

3.5 Incident Photos

- a. Out of respect for victims and their families, photographs of crash scenes and other incidents in which someone was injured or killed shall not be posted on social media.

Section 4: Making Content Accessible

4.1 ADA Compliance

- a. The State of Michigan is committed to providing access to public information for all individuals, including those with disabilities, who use state websites, applications or services. The following are requirements for making content accessible:

- i. Alt Text for Images

When posting photos or other images, alternative text must be added to describe the image/photo.

1. Add alt text using the “Add description” feature below the image on web/mobile app.
2. Describe the image and its purpose in 1-3 sentences. Describe the context of the image and how it is connected to the content in the post.
3. End alt text with a period so that screen readers pause before reading the rest of the content.

4. Avoid writing “image of” or “picture of” as screen readers announce images before reading the alt text.
5. There is a 1,000-character limit on X.
6. Avoid posting images of flattened text (jpgs, pngs, screenshots of news releases). Instead, link to a website or somewhere that has the text in a readable format.
7. Avoid acronyms.

ii. Captioning Videos

All videos are required to have burned on captions for content accessibility. This also helps individuals who watch with sound off and keeps the message clear across all platforms. Below are the steps for adding captions on different programs.

1. Canva:




- a) Open Canva on phone or website.
- b) On the home page, select “video” and then “mobile video.”
- c) Upload video or add already uploaded video to the page.
- d) Select “text.”
- e) Under “dynamic text” select “generate captions.”
- f) Watch video and read captions. Edit as needed. Ensure captions are displayed in a minimum of 12-point font to maintain readability and support accessibility standards.
- g) Download video.

2. Adobe Express:

- a) Open Adobe Express App on phone.
- b) Select “video.”
- c) Under “video quick actions” scroll to the end to see “caption video.”
- d) Upload the video to be captioned.
- e) Watch the video and read captions. Edit as needed.
- f) Download video.

iii. Copywriting

1. Capitalize each word #InYourHashtag.
 - a) Helps screen readers know to separate words
 - b) Easier for everyone to read
2. Post in plain language.

- a) Write to the audience
 - b) Organize information (bulleted lists, break up paragraphs, threads)
 - c) Be clear and concise
3. If using AI tools like CoPilot to brainstorm, proofread or refine content, remember these tools often produce a similar tone of voice for all users. As a result, it can be easy to tell when a post was created using AI. Common indicators include:
- a) Excessive use of emojis (which can also affect ADA compliance – see more below)
 - b) Several hashtags
 - c) Unnatural or overly formal phrasing
 - d) A tone that doesn't match the rest of our content
 - e) Inaccuracies
4. If AI is used for drafting, be sure to always read through what it provides. Make edits to make it sound more human, like the department's brand and consistent. Review the [SOM and MSP policy on AI](#).
- iv. Emojis and Icons
1. Each emoji has its own individual description.
 2. Screen readers read aloud emoji descriptions; therefore, excessive emoji use is not advised.
 3.  reads aloud as "three tornados" rather than "tornado, tornado, tornado."
 4. Put emojis at the end of content, rather than throughout, because the screen reader will read the emoji description in the middle of the text.
 - a) Ex: "Remember to change the clock  before going to bed  tonight" will be read by a screen reader as "Remember to change the clock Alarm clock before going to bed Sleeping accommodation tonight."

Section 5: Analytics Tracking

5.1 Analytics

- a. All SOM social media, social networking accounts should have a content strategy that relates to the account's justification, goal assessments and agency / office / division / section / unit / or program communications objectives. If departments and the SOM are not collecting diverse sets of data and analyzing it regularly, the overall impact of social media activities cannot be determined.

- b. The SOM's policy around analytics reporting seeks to:
 - i. Collect key metrics and a common set of performance measures across all official SOM social media accounts.
 - ii. Establish a process for consistent collection of data and reporting.
 - iii. Provide data reports to evaluate content strategy and engagement for SOM social media accounts.
 - iv. Establish baseline content, growth, and engagement trends to influence future best practices and engagement activities.
- c. At the beginning of each year, each account owner should establish annual social media goals and email them to [COD](#). Analytics tracking helps ensure we are meeting our individual and department goals.
- d. The COD pulls all social media metrics monthly, with the exception of Nextdoor. It is the responsibility of each PIO to compile their Nextdoor analytics each month in the [shared folder](#). Instructions on how to do so are provided below.
 - i. Find each post published for the month
 - ii. Total up the monthly impressions, engagements (likes and comments) and number of posts
 - iii. Insert those numbers in the respective field on the shared document
 - iv. Find the top performing post based on monthly impressions. Click the "share" arrow and "copy link." Paste that into the "top performing post" cell in the document.

Review Responsibility: Communications and Outreach Division

Accreditation Standards: CALEA N/A