

SOCIAL MEDIA

EPA uses the term “social media” to refer to web-based and mobile technologies that go beyond simply providing information – also allowing collaboration, interaction, and sharing. Examples of social media include blogs, wikis, photo and video sharing, podcasts, social networking, social news, web conferencing, and webcasting. Such tools allow EPA to reach out to people who may not engage the government in more formal, traditional ways. EPA uses social media tools to create a more effective and transparent government, to engage the public and EPA’s partners, and to facilitate collaboration.

Required activity?

No. However, the use of social media may positively affect the success of public participation efforts at RCRA sites and serves as an important communication mechanism. Monitoring local and other social media sites may help to understand community activities, stay informed of facility-related community attitudes, and become aware of misinformation, rumors, and community reactions to inaccurate information that could mislead the public regarding the Agency’s actions. Because many people turn to social media for information and rely less on traditional media, it is important to evaluate opportunities to use social media to reach the appropriate audience.

EPA’s public participation guidelines for the use of social media in RCRA public participation activities are detailed in Chapter 2 of the [2016 Edition of the RCRA Public Participation Manual](#).

Making It Work

When to Use

Generally, it is EPA’s policy to use social media where appropriate to meet its mission of protecting human health and the environment. Permitting agencies and facility owners/operators should consider applying appropriate social media technologies to public participation work whenever possible, in accordance with regional policies.

Social media offer additional venues for reaching communities to engage in discussions, disseminate information, and maintain regular contact. Using social media is an effective approach for reaching people affected by RCRA facilities and may impact the success of public participation efforts at RCRA sites.

Questions to ask when considering the use of social media include:

- What is your goal?
- Who is your audience?
- What type of information do you want to share?
- How much time and how many resources will be required to commit to this social media communication effort?
- How will you ensure social media will be effective? This is based on a good understanding of each tool and its potential accomplishments.
- How can social media be used in addition to, rather than instead of, traditional news media?
- Does the target community have easy access to the internet, either through computers or smartphones?
- Does the community use social media?

How to Use

Social media provide a means to hold a conversation with the community. Not all social media serve the same functions or reach the same number of people, but a combination of social media tools can be used to supplement traditional communications to:

- Connect with a community when travel is difficult.
- Promote public meetings and other site events.
- Share videos, photos, and summaries that document public meetings and other events, and show site activities and accomplishments.
- Engage in conversation with the community.
- Provide regular updates on conditions or share data, such as daily air quality.

Before using social media, it is a good idea to:

- Research and identify the best social media mechanism to reach the community members with whom you want to communicate.
- Reach out to local government and community organizations that generally know which social media outreach tools they have used successfully to disseminate information within the community.

Examples of Social Media Platforms that EPA Uses

EPA uses social media technologies and tools to share information for everyone to gain a better understanding of environmental conditions and solutions. EPA does not endorse any particular social media site or technique. Below is a partial list of platforms used by EPA:

- Facebook
- Flickr
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- RSS Feeds
- Twitter
- YouTube

EPA Social Media Policy

EPA personnel are subject to EPA agency-wide policy when using social media, which varies according to EPA Region and evolves as new tools and technologies appear. EPA's website, [Policy and Procedures for Using Social Media at EPA](#), includes links to policy documents that establish the principles for the use of social media at EPA, both internally and externally, and how to best represent EPA when using social media. Keep in mind that there are legal issues and federal requirements that are unique to the government, such as privacy, records management, and rules governing procurement and staff participation on external sites that directly impact EPA employees' use of social media tools. In addition, all EPA social media posts must be approved by a manager and the office's Web Council Representative, who will get final approval from EPA's Office of Web Communications. This will ensure the social media project conforms to

the program's goals. While EPA does not endorse any particular social media site or technique, information and guidance about the social media tools that can be used are available on EPA's Social Media Intranet webpage.

In addition, EPA's content in social media tools must be accessible, as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Content must be accessible regardless of its location on the EPA website or a third-party site in accordance with EPA's [Accessible Electronic and Information Technology Policy](#). If making the content accessible would impose an undue burden on the Agency, or would otherwise fall under a Section 508 exception, provide alternative access to the content.

Tips

- Use EPA-issued cell phones and computers to manage Agency social media communications. Photos and videos recorded on cell phones should be sent to EPA email accounts for records management.
- Remember that you are participating in your official capacity and representing EPA. Make sure that your online activities and online content are consistent with your job responsibilities at EPA. Only EPA staff should be posting and responding to social media; interns and contractors must not be tasked with social media.
- Identify your EPA affiliation and use your work email address. Do not comment or edit anonymously.
- Monitor your social media content and respond in a timely manner.
- Photos, videos, and voice recordings used in EPA multimedia content or social media may require permission from an individual or content owner through EPA's consent form or license agreement. Refer to [EPA Multimedia Consent and License Forms](#) for detailed guidelines.

Examples

Facebook

- A Facebook group was created that serves as a way for EPA to share information with the public and for the public to raise and discuss issues related to the Dupont/Pompton Lakes site. The site can be found [here](#). Note that you must be logged into Facebook.

In-the-moment videos

- Region 1: [Watch Phil Goddard, Community Advisory Team Member and Manager at Town of Bourne Landfill, describe the benefits of environmental stewardship related to the Otis ANGB/JBCC site](#)
- Region 3: [Green Roof at the Tobyhanna Superfund Site Conserves Energy and Reduces Stormwater Run-off](#)
- Region 4: [Watch Darren Leach, Memphistown CAG and SuperJTI Community Partner, discuss the benefits of the SuperJTI program](#)
- Region 8: [EPA kicks off air quality research in Colorado with NASA and NCAR](#)
- Region 10: [Puesta del Sol School Food Waste Program w/EPA](#)

EPA Videos

- [Making a Difference in Communities: California Gulch Superfund Site, Leadville, Colorado](#)
- [Whitmoyer Laboratories Site Redevelopment](#)

Checklist for Social Media

- Determine if social media will be an effective tool for reaching your intended audience.
- Be sure that you have a basic understanding of each kind of social media so that you can use social media tools effectively.
- Determine whether community members generally have access to social media through the internet, via computers or smartphones.
- Base the use of social media around meeting your communication goals, reaching the target audience, and imparting the type of information that can be effectively shared using a social media tool.
- Ensure that social media will be used in conjunction with — rather than instead of — traditional news media.
- Research the best social media mechanisms to use to reach community members, local governments and community organizations as well as the forms of social media they have successfully used in the past.
- Identify the EPA personnel who will be responsible for keeping up on social media posts and conversations, ensuring that comments will receive a quick response and accurate data is provided in real time.
- Read EPA's policy and procedures for using social media.
 - Ensure that social media are being used in compliance with EPA policies. Refer to the Policy and Procedures for Using Social Media at EPA website for more information.
 - Obtain approval by a Web Council Representative before any use of social media.
 - Ensure the use of social media is Section 508 compliant. If this isn't possible, provide alternate access.