



Records Management Guidance

Social Media – Records Retention and Disclosure

King County Employees that engage in social media use for King County business should be aware of the potential risks of doing so, if they do not follow the standards outlined in King County’s Social Media Handbook. In many circumstances, communications created by KC employees using social media will meet a legal definition of a public record and will need to be retained to comply with RCW 40.14 and accessible to members of the public, in compliance with RCW 42.56 This guidance is to make King County employees aware of their social media use responsibilities and rights, depending upon how it is used.

1) Employees specifically authorized to post on County-owned social media channels: For most posts made to official King County Social Media site (pages, accounts) that are created by authorized personnel, those posts are automatically captured and retained by the ArchiveSocial software, managed by KCIT. For questions about ArchiveSocial and records for social media accounts, please contact the county’s Digital Engagement Manager, Warren Kagarise.

Example: A Regional Animal Services employee authorized to post and manage on the official RASKC Facebook page posts the “Pet of the Week”. The post and all comments made are considered public record and are captured by the Archive Social software.

2) Employees being encouraged or directed by a supervisor or manager to post on personal social media channels for County business (the County may or may not pay for enhanced features on these sites): Posts to personal social media pages made by King County Employees for the purpose of King County Business would be considered public record. This scenario does create a risk, as it could potentially open up an employee’s private account for the purpose of disclosure if a public records request was made which covered the post and related records. Since employee’s personal social media accounts are not captured using the ArchiveSocial tool, searching and production are much more complex. It is recommended that this method be avoided. If a social media account needs to be opened for business purposes, contact your department’s communications manager and the county’s Digital Engagement Manager, Warren Kagarise, for a consultation and to complete a Social Media Action Plan.

Example: An HR Recruitment employee is requested by their manager to post a new job link to their personal LinkedIn page. Members of the public request information about the job and the employee responds on the post providing information about the position and application process. The original post and all comments would be considered public record.

3) Employees creating public records on personal sites without being directed to do so. If you use a personal social media account to conduct business for your agency, you are creating (and potentially receiving) public records. This activity also does not align with the county’s social media policy, as outlined in the Social Media Handbook, which calls for official communications to be posted through the county’s authorized social media channels. If you are conducting agency business via social media, the records you create and receive are public records and must be managed appropriately. While King County supports individual employees right to free speech, employees should be made aware of the risks associated with creating public records on personal sites. This scenario does create a risk, as it could potentially open up an employee’s private account for the purpose of disclosure if a public records request was made which covered the post and related records.



King County Records Management Program
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Example: An employee in Public Health posts information about Covid vaccination sites on their personal Instagram page in order to generate awareness about sites. The employee posts pictures of the site location and answers questions from the public about the site such as available parking, whether an appointment is needed, and hours of operation. Whether the intent of the employee was to further county business or not, the post and comments have the potential to be public record even if the employee was not directed by their supervisor or manager to do so, if it furthers the interest of the County.



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