

COUNTY OF SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
7/22/2014

Policies and Procedures for County Government Use of Social Media

Posting of County announcements and information on social media sites is handled exclusively by the Somerset County Office of Public Information (PIO). Postings may include but are not limited to routine press releases, emergency announcements, and special event announcements, at the discretion of the Public Information Director and/or his/her designee.

Posting of public health-related topics on social media sites is handled exclusively by the Somerset County Health Department. Postings may include but are not limited to seasonal flu information and clinic schedules, cancer awareness information and events, Medical Reserve Corps volunteer recruitment and training, and others, at the discretion of the County Director of Public Health and/or Public Health Educator.

No other County departments, divisions, or affiliated programs may create their own social media pages or accounts. This restriction does not apply to independent County-affiliated agencies, including the Prosecutor's Office, Raritan Valley Community College, Vo-Tech Schools, Executive County Superintendent of Schools, Board of Elections, Board of Social Services, Board of Taxation, Library Commission, Park Commission and Business Partnership. These entities may set up social media pages without approval from the Board of Chosen Freeholders or County Administrator and are responsible for developing and enforcing policies governing the use of same.

Future requests from general government County departments, divisions, or affiliated programs to create social media pages or accounts will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the County Administrator, the Public Information Director and the appropriate Department Head. The final decision to grant such requests rests with the County Administrator.

Policies and Procedures for Public Postings to County Pages on Social Media Websites

The following posting policy/disclaimer is posted on Somerset County's social media pages.

The purpose of this page is to provide a forum for the public to receive information about Somerset County, NJ government offices, programs, issues, and events and to comment or ask questions if they so choose.

The Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders strives to make County government operations transparent for citizens. We encourage helpful and useful comments and want to create an open discussion related to the content on the page.

However, this is a moderated channel, meaning all comments will be reviewed for appropriate content. Please show respect to those you are addressing when submitting comments. Comments that are off-topic or include abusive or vulgar

language, sexual content, spam, hate speech, personal attacks, advertisements or endorsements of products, or similar content will not be posted on this page. We will not redact or otherwise edit any comments, but we will remove comments that fall into any of the areas described in the previous sentence.

We reserve the right to determine which comments are acceptable for this page. We will, however, attempt to comment on legitimate questions and concerns regarding Somerset County government offices, programs, issues, and events.

Somerset County does not guarantee the accuracy, authenticity, appropriateness, or security of any hyperlinks provided as part of public comments posted on the County's social media page.

This is a public forum and any information provided in comments may be publicly available on the County's social media page; the privacy policies of the social media vendor apply. As such, please do not include personal details such as your home address, telephone number, email address, or any other information you do not want available to the general public. If you choose to post personal information, you do so at your own risk. Somerset County disclaims any liability for any loss or damage resulting from any comments posted on this page.

If you have specific questions regarding a Somerset County matter that involves details you do not wish to share publicly, please send your inquiry to publicinfo@co.somerset.nj.us and it will be forwarded to the appropriate County office or affiliated agency for a response.

We recognize that the Internet and social media are available 24/7. Comments are welcome at any time. However, please be advised that questions or comments typically will be responded to during normal business hours, which are Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except [County holidays](#).

In the event of an emergency situation affecting all or part of Somerset County, please DO NOT rely on postings to our social media pages as a first line of contact. Responses may not be able to be made in a timely manner during an emergency. If you have a true emergency (medical, police or fire) DIAL 9-1-1. For all other emergencies, call your municipal police department.

For general information about emergencies affecting Somerset County residents, including weather-related delays or closings, visit our [Emergency, Weather & Road-Closing Alerts](#) page.

Comments found to be in violation of this policy will be removed by the PIO Director or his/her designee within the Public Information Office. Screenshots of deleted comments will be maintained by PIO along with an explanation of why the posts were deleted.

Social Media Postings and the Open Public Records Act (OPRA)

Somerset County recognizes that postings and comments on its social media pages constitute part of the official record of County documents.

All comments posted to the County's social media pages will become part of the official public record and may be accessed via Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests.

Screenshots of all social media comments are archived by PIO.

Employee Participation in Social Media

Due to the centralized nature of social media management adopted by Somerset County (i.e. all social media postings and responses are handled by PIO on behalf of the County and its departments/divisions), limited access to social media is provided to County employees while at work.

Employees who choose to post comments, pictures and/or videos on the internet, such as social networks, blogs, wikis or other online forums on their own time, using their own computers or electronic devices, should consider the following guidelines:

- Do not use your work email address to register for any online site or service unless it is directly related to your job.
- Do not display the Somerset County seal or any other official County logo or design on your personal online accounts.
- Do not state or imply that you are speaking for Somerset County, for a County department, division, agency or program, or for County officials. If you do publish to a blog or other social media outlet and identify yourself as a County employee, include a disclaimer, such as: "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of Somerset County, NJ."
- The following information must not be posted on a County employee's personal website or social media page:
 - County's confidential or proprietary information
 - Another County employee's personal medical information, which would be in violation of HIPAA protections
 - Another County employee's personal or confidential information (e.g. home address, personal phone number, etc.)
- Do carefully consider the implications of "following," "liking," "friending" or otherwise establishing online relationships via social media with supervisors, subordinates and/or clients. Some of these relationships may be misinterpreted and may present the potential for sharing protected information.
- Do familiarize yourself with Somerset County's online presence, on your own time and equipment, if you choose. Even if you are not the County's designated online spokesperson or publisher, if you see potential issues or errors in any online postings about the County, notify your supervisor and/or the PIO staff.

- Do share and repost County news, events and other public information with family and friends through your personal social networks, if you choose. You also may choose to become a friend, fan or follower of the County's social media pages.
- Do protect your privacy when using online social networks, but realize that there is no such thing as a truly "private" online post; posts or screenshots can be shared by your friends with others for whom they were not intended.