Easy Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media

For all uses of social media and online interaction, you should always consult and understand the following:

- Social Media Policy (DOI)
- Social Media Guidebook (DOI)
- Ethics Guide for DOI Employees
- DOI Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- USGS Use of Government Computers

Personal Use Disclaimer: If you're using social media for personal reasons (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc) you may want to add a phrase that clarifies that you are posting your own opinions. Even though you're acting in your own personal capacity, you're still an employee of the Federal Government. Some examples are "Tweets are my own" or "Posts are my own opinions", "What I share is my own opinion and not endorsed by any organization." We understand that it's not possible to add a phrase like this in every single post. However, all social media services do provide profile options where you can add such language. While this is not legally required, it is a good practice and something that can help sharpen the lines between your role as a public servant and your rights as a private citizen.

When you're on duty, you can use social media for personal reasons during approved "personal use" time – you must remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

- See: DOI Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- See: USGS Use of Government Computers

When you're on duty, you can use social media to regularly talk about your area of expertise, if approved by Office of Communications and Publishing and your supervisor – you must remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

- See: USGS Ambassadors
- See: Social Media and the Hatch Act (scroll down to “Social Media” section.)

When you’re on duty, you can use social media to respond to a comment, post, bulletin board, discussion forum, correct a scientific inaccuracy, etc as it’s related to your area of expertise – you must remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

- See: Social Media Response Considerations
- See: DOI Internet Acceptable Use Policy

When you’re off duty, you can use social media for personal reasons – you must remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

When you’re off duty, you can use social media to talk about your area of expertise, as a representative of the USGS. If...
● **you’re asked/approached** by a non-Federal organization **to regularly contribute** to one of their organization’s official websites or social media – you **must** remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

● **on your own initiative/decision**, you are responding to a comment, post, bulletin board, discussion forum, **correct a scientific inaccuracy**, etc as it’s related to your area of expertise – you **must** remain aware of how your use reflects upon you and the USGS.

If you will be receiving compensation for contributing to a non-Federal organization’s websites or social media presences on matters related to your USGS job or the USGS mission, you must receive prior Ethics Office approval via Form 9-1510 (Ethics Approval for Outside Work or Activities).

Errors in Official Posts: Our social media presences are managed by humans and, by nature, humans are not infallible. In the event that an official USGS account posts/tweets an error or inaccuracy that goes unnoticed, our employees can contact the USGS account through that account service directly, or by email at socialmedia [at] usgs [dot] gov, and provide the corrected information. All suggestions will be confirmed and, if an error was made, a correction will be made through that service.

Training: The USGS encourages the strategic use of social media for the organization. We provide our employees with internal resources to stay informed about social media at the USGS and offer training sessions for employees and programs when requested on the use of social media at the USGS, expectations of that use, and tools and resources to get started. At all times, employees are encouraged to contact us at socialmedia [at] usgs [dot] gov if they have any questions related to social media use at the USGS.

Political Activity
As election seasons start to wind up, people will naturally want to share, post, and comment on politically related content, campaigns, etc. As a Federal Employee, you have a responsibility to know how you can, or can’t, interact with politically-related posts on social media sites using personal or official accounts.

Depending on the type of employee you are, you will have different restrictions.

Step 1: Determine the type of employee you are:

- **Less Restricted Employees**
- **Further Restricted Employees**

Step 2: Read the “Social Media” FAQ section for your particular employee type.