Water Safety Ireland – Social Media Policy

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Approved by	WSI Council
Date Approved	

Version History

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V1.0	March 2018	Initial Doc.
V1.1	July 2022	Update doc

Contents

1. Introduction

WSI communicates with all stakeholders at various levels and by using many communications tools. As part of its communications strategy, WSI has incorporated the use of social media in order to raise awareness of WSI, expand its communication activities and to embrace a wider audience. Social media encompasses online tools and other interactive technologies which allow users to interact with one another. It includes a wide range of online tools, such as blogs, podcasts, 'wikis', message boards, social networking websites and content sharing websites. The increased popularity in the use of social media has highlighted the need for greater vigilance in its use. This increased use has also raised a number of issues that need to be considered in relation to its proper use and management.

This policy is designed to heighten awareness of the expectations of WSI members and staff for the use of social media and to assist in making the best use of the resource. It will also set out the limits of its use.

This policy aims to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of WSI, its employees, members, customers and stakeholders when using Social Media.

2. Scope – what does this policy cover?

This policy applies to all forms of electronic media communications (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities and share ideas, information, personal messages, and other content (such as videos, blogs, articles, message boards, images etc.)

3. Applicability - Who does it apply to?
- The WSI Social Media Policy applies to all :
- WSI staff
- to consultants and contractors working directly for WSI
- to WSI members when operating on behalf of WSI
- to WSI members when operating as franchisees
- Vat exempted Community Rescue Boats
- All other parties subject to oversight by WSI

This policy is applicable when they are engaging in any form of social media activities on behalf of WSI and when personally referring to their role in the organisation.

A full list of applicable organisations is included in Appendix 1.

Work undertaken as part of an investigation is excluded from this policy.

The CEO will be kept informed of the development of social media and email accounts used to gather information as part of WSI's promotional work.

4. Access to Social Media from within the WSI network

Access to certain social media sites (E.G. Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram etc.) is provided for legitimate organisational and business purposes. Access to or usage of WSI social media networks should be for only for official purposes and moderated by WSI social media administrators,

and those designated by them.

5. Policy

The WSI Social Media Policy is intended to help users engage with social media wisely. It aims to protect WSI staff and members and prevent misuse of the service. It is not meant to infringe upon your personal interaction online.

Remember:

Any information published online can be accessed around the world within seconds and will be publicly available for all to see. You may be held legally liable for anything you write or present online. (For anything written or presented on official WSI web space, WSI is legally liable.).

In order to protect WSI and its members the following rules apply regarding the use of social media.

1. The decision to utilise any social media platform must be formally approved by either the WSI Headquarters management team, Water Safety Area Committees, or the management team of associated organisations.
2. Social media tools should only be used by the appointed social media administrators and those designated by them, in support of their role and where there is a clear organisational requirement.
3. All social media platforms utilised on behalf of the organisation must be recorded in WSI Headquarters.
4. All social media sites should be clearly labelled and identifiable as being Water Safety Ireland   sites. (For example "Water Safety Ireland - Fingal", rather than "Fingal Water Safety").
5. It is the responsibility of Water Safety Area Committees and the management team of associated organisations to register the use of social media with WSI Headquarters.
6. The register must record the administrators of the social media platform as well as the intention behind its use.
7. Unless given permission by your local management team, you are not authorised to use any form of social media on behalf of WSI.
8. If, as a member of WSI, you are using any form of social media personally, and are publishing information or taking part in forum discussions that is any way linked to the work/remit of WSI or your role in WSI, (for example on WhatsApp , LinkedIn, Twitter, blogs, etc.), you must use a disclaimer as follows: "The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily reflect the views of WSI".
9. You may not share information that is confidential and proprietary to WSI. This includes information about upcoming press releases, water safety alerts, draft reports/publications, employees or any other information that the organisation has not released publicly. (These are given as examples only and do not cover the range of what WSI considers confidential) If you have any question about whether information has been released publicly, or doubts of any kind, speak with your manager or WSAC officer first.
10. The WSI logo may not be used without explicit permission from a member of the WSI Marketing Commission, listed on www.watersafety.ie.
11. WSI Social Media must not be used to solicit business for personal gain or profit.

6. Guidelines for the use of Social Media

You should always be mindful that whether professionally or personally, online and web interactions can result in members of the public forming opinions about WSI, its employees, volunteers, stakeholders and also its output.

Always think before you write, comment or reply as you may be held liable for anything you write or present online. WSI may be held liable or anything written or presented on an official WSI web space.

Never discuss other WSI members, HQ staff, official agency staff, Council members, Commission members, Working Group members, customers, clients, water safety businesses or other stakeholders without their prior approval.

Acceptable uses of Social Media include (but are not limited to) the following

- Publishing news stories relating to the work of WSI (either nationally or in the community)
- Promoting training courses to the public
- Public service announcements including water safety advice
- Promoting local or national water related events
- Sending messages to WSI members, either locally or nationally

While the medium is different, many of the legal considerations associated with print and broadcast need to be borne in mind.

Unacceptable use of social media includes (but is not limited to) the following

- Knowingly compromising or embarrassing WSI
- Copyright Infringement
- Falsely representing yourself/ WSI
- Representing personal opinion as being that of WSI
- Defamation - knowingly making a statement about a person or company that could be considered harmful to a person's reputation
- Knowingly linking or referring to internet sites that contain obscene, pornographic, threatening, hateful, racially pejorative/insensitive or other objectionable content
- Breaching confidentiality – WSI members must never disclose confidential information in any social media contributions.
- Creating fake blogs (flogs).
- 'Astroturfing' - the practice of falsely creating the impression of independent, popular support by means of orchestrated and disguised online activity.

7. Monitoring the use of Social Media Networks

All internet access from within the WSI network, including access to social media networks, is subject to monitoring.

Social Media sites used and controlled by WSI members or associates but external to the WSI network (for example, sites used by Water Safety Area Committees) will also be subject to monitoring. Monitoring of social media usage and site content is carried out solely to protect WSI,

staff, members and associates. Reports from social media monitoring will be circulated to the Executive Management Team periodically.

8. Compliance

The terms and conditions of this policy must be adhered to at all times and failure to comply could result in withdrawal of access to social media networks and to disciplinary action.

Interpretation

If unsure of any aspects of this Policy, staff should consult with reporting manager and members should consult with their local management team.

9. Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually due to the changing nature of social media.

10. Appendix 1

List of applicable organisations
- Water Safety Ireland Headquarters
- Water Safety Area Committees
- Vat Exempted Community Inshore Rescue Boat Stations
- Affiliated Water Safety and Swimming Clubs
- Franchisee Operators

11. Appendix 2

Additional Guidelines for the Safe and Correct Use of Social Media

All activity on social media tools should complement and/or support your role in the WSI.

The social media sites which the WSI has a presence on include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Instagram
- WhatsApp /Teamer / Snapchat / Pinterest and other online platforms

Business Principles: Understand and follow the WSI's business principles as you would outside the social media arena. Respond to posts, comments or uploaded information in a professional, but friendly and efficient manner. Interact with people as you would use conventional methods (by phone, email, letters, and fax), but in a less formal style. Remember; think before your write, comment, or reply.

Confidentiality - WSI staff and members have a 'duty of confidentiality' and must not disclose any information which is considered confidential and which is not already in the public domain. Confidential WSI information includes details of upcoming press releases, water safety alerts, draft reports/publications, members or employee details and any other information that has not been publicly released by WSI.

These are given as examples only and do not cover the range of what WSI considers confidential. If you have any question about whether information has been released publicly or doubts of any kind, speak with your manager before releasing the information.

Defamation - If a defamatory statement is written down (in print or online) it is known as 'libel'. If it is spoken, it is known as 'slander'. Posting a defamatory statement online or recording it on a podcast would both be examples of libel. Action can also be taken for repeating libellous information from another source. This may also apply to linking to sites containing defamatory information so you must check carefully before quoting statements or linking to other blogs or websites.

Any company that provides a forum for social interaction may be held liable for any defamatory statements they host. Any such statement will be removed from the WSI social media space as soon as possible.

WSI may be held responsible for something an employee or member has written and/or said if it is on behalf of the WSI, or is on a dedicated WSI web space (even if the content is subsequently deleted). It should be remembered that deleted content is still stored and accessible.

Discretion: Never discuss other staff members, official agency staff, Council Members, Commission members, Working Group members, customers, associates, water safety businesses or other stakeholders without their prior approval.

Competence: You should, in this area as in others, be aware of the limitations of your professional competence, and should therefore only engage in social media comments or posts for which you are suitably skilled and experienced.

Copyright: Ensure you are not infringing copyright rules.

Identification: When discussing WSI or water safety issues, always identify clearly who you are, what your role in WSI is and publish in the first person. Use a disclaimer where appropriate.

Personal Responsibility: You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be mindful that what you publish will be public for many years.

Authenticity: Always be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of WSI. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be the first to come clean and admit it – honesty of this type quickly builds respect.

Respect the Right to Give an Opinion: Some people might be hostile towards WSI. Respect their right to have an opinion and to share it. You may dislike their viewpoint or disagree with it, but adopting an open mind when it comes to differing opinions makes you a better communicator. You can disagree and still be respectful. Always remember you are not just replying to someone, but replying to someone in front of dozens or hundreds of others.

Keep Calm: Don't escalate heated discussions but be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to ameliorate tensions and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry - leave it, calm down, and return to it at a later date, when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.

Don't Be Alone: Point out the conversation to others in your social media group. They may also be looking at the same content and be about to respond. Others may have a different reaction to the piece.

Personal Judgement: If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn't do it. Remember, the information you publish will be visible to other web users for a long time. If in doubt, discuss it with your manager/director.

Respect: Don't use ethnic or racial slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would be unacceptable to WSI. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may

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be inflammatory (e.g. politics and religion). Do not engage in name calling or any such behavior that will reflect negatively on WSI's reputation.

Be Helpful: Try and provide as much information as you and the WSI are able to give. If there is information you can't provide, say so. Support all points by linking to the WSI website as an information source.

Be Positive: Joining discussions or adding to a thread that is not constructive does not help WSI or the community in general. Try and make every interaction one that provides value. It should appropriately represent WSI. Being positive is also infectious and is reciprocated. If people add an opinion to a Facebook or Twitter message you started, thank them since they've taken the time to contribute and help.

Be Concise: This might sound like the opposite of providing as much information as possible, but it is not. Depending on the interaction, it might be a case of correcting information or giving the opinion of WSI. In hostile environments, detractors will examine every word you use. Get to the point quickly and provide the information in the first few sentences to ensure clarity. In a world of speed reading and scanning, if you can provide information in the first three lines compared to the first 30, the scanners and those who take their time will read you more.

Personal Privacy: Avoid publishing your personal contact details or those of others where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them. It is better to contact an individual outside the collaborative space if you want to take something off-line.

Etiquette: Before your first contribution on any social media site, you should be aware of the type and amount of activity that is taking place. This will give you a feel for the style of contributions, the nature of the content and any 'unwritten' rules that other contributors might follow.

2. Guidelines for Site Management

Content provided to a social media platform owned or controlled by WSI (e.g. WSI Facebook, Twitter Instagram and LinkedIn pages) or that openly refers to WSI should always be monitored and moderated.

The objective of monitoring content is to ensure unsuitable content is not associated with WSI.

Moderation is NOT designed to:

- censure people from expressing their opinions
- correct grammar or spelling errors in comments, (except where such errors detract from the intended meaning of the comment)

As a general rule, comments should remain on the site in the form and format that they were input by the commenter, provided they are clear, appropriate and do not contain unsuitable content.

Postings should be removed from the site if they:

- refer to/name a water safety business or agency in a negative manner
- refer to/name an WSI Volunteer, WSI staff member, Official agency staff, Council member, Commission member or Working Group member in a negative manner

- aim to generate business or constitute advertising
- contain swear words or other potentially offensive language
- are considered likely to provoke, attack or offend others
- are considered to be malicious in intent
- are racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, abusive or otherwise objectionable
- break the law or condone or encourage unlawful behaviour
- are seen to impersonate someone else
- describe or encourage activities which could endanger the safety or well-being of others
- contain links which are deemed unsuitable
- Before a post is removed, either print off a copy or save a screen grab of the page that shows the post, so that there is a record of it.

if a post/comment is removed from the site, where possible, an email should be sent to the author of the post advising him/her why the post/comment was removed.

If it is not possible to directly remove a post or message from a particular social media platform. the administrator must contact directly the person who made the post and request its removal.

If the post is not removed at the soonest instance the administrator should post a statement detailing that removal has been requested and the person responsible for the post should be denied access to make further posting on the platform.