



Electronic Records Management: How Long Do Social Media Posts Need to Be Kept?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state agencies and local government entities on the retention of social media posts.

Is there one retention period for social media posts?

NO – Public records retention depends on the *function* and *content* of the record, not its format or medium.

How long a social media post needs to be kept depends on an agency's business, legal and accountability needs. Some will need to be kept for a short time, some will need to be kept longer, and some are considered "Archival" and will need to be kept forever.

The questions to ask to determine the function/content of social media posts are:

1. What is this post about? (content)
2. Why was it sent and for what purpose (function)

Having just one blanket retention period for social media posts is akin to having a single retention period for all letter-sized paper – the format does not determine the retention.

Aren't all social media posts secondary/duplicate copies?

Not necessarily – Social media posts may contain unique agency business transactions or communications that relate to, but do not duplicate, other agency records.

Should my agency just keep every social media post?

NO – Storage is not the same thing as Management. In the long run, keeping every social media post will make it harder to locate public records that need to be retained and is not an efficient use of agency resources. Managing your social media posts cuts costs on staff time and storage/IT resources and promotes accountability in your agency.

Where can I find information on records retention based on function and content?

RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES – Retention schedules outline the minimum retention periods for records as well as the authority to destroy or transfer records that have met retention. These schedules are published online at the Washington State Archives' website.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**

**www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov**