



Electronic Records Management: Strategies for Managing Social Media Records Retention

Purpose: Provide guidance to state agencies and local government entities on managing social media records for the purposes of public records retention.

Because social media posts happen on third-party platforms, it can be difficult to manage these records in an accessible and authentic format. With that in mind, here are some strategies for social media records retention:

1. **Identify business uses** – Decide what business uses your agency has for social media.
2. **Create a social media policy** – Identifying the purposes for which social media will be used by the agency can help determine the appropriate retention periods.
3. **Sort social media by their retention period** – Using the records retention schedules, determine the retention for each of the business uses identified in Step 1.
 - There is no catch-all retention period for social media.
 - If multiple retention periods cannot be applied to the social media records, identify the longest applicable retention period and apply that period to all social media posts.
4. **Use a capture tool** – Social media records should be kept in electronic format, with all the associated formatting and metadata. Using a social media capture tool can ensure this information is kept along with the content of the record.
 - Once you identify a capture tool, develop policies and procedures to manage the storage and access of that social media content.
 - If a capture tool is not an option for your agency, consider manually capturing screenshots of social media posts in something like Microsoft Word. Captured screenshots don't have the same authenticity/metadata, but they are better than doing nothing.
5. **Apply retention to captured copy** – As managing retention of social media posts on the actual social media platform may be difficult, the agency should apply retention to the **captured** copy of the social media record.

Once you know which social media posts you have and how your agency can retain them, you are ready to manage social media records!

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

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