APCO ANS 1.112.1-2014

Best Practices for The Use of Social Media in Public Safety Communications
APCO ANS 1.112.1-2014

Best Practices for
The Use of Social Media in Public-Safety Communications

Standard written by The APCO International 9-1-1 Emerging Technologies Committee

Abstract: This candidate standard provides a standardized set of guidelines and methodologies by which a PSAP can deal with each instance.

Keywords: PSAP, Social Media, policies, procedures
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD* ................................................................................................................................................. 4
A LETTER FROM THE APCO INTERNATIONAL EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES COMMITTEE CHAIR* ........................................................... 7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS* ................................................................................................................................ 8
APCO STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (SDC) ................................................................. 10
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS* ........................................................................................................ 11
  1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 12
  2. Definitions/Dictionary ......................................................................................................................... 12
  3. Agency Use of Social Media for Emergency and Non-Emergency Reporting ........................................ 12
  4. Agency Recording/Retention ............................................................................................................. 14
  5. Agency use of Social Media for Administrative Functions ................................................................. 14
  6. Agency use of Social Media during an Incident ................................................................................. 15
  7. Employee Personal Social Media use (On-Duty or Off-Duty) ............................................................. 16
  8. Agency use of Social Media during a Major Event or Emergency Management .................................... 17

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)
Foreword*

APCO International is the world's largest organization of public safety communications professionals. It serves the needs of public safety communications practitioners worldwide - and the welfare of the general public as a whole - by providing complete expertise, professional development, technical assistance, advocacy and outreach.

The 2014 - 2015 APCO International Board of Directors:
John W. Wright, President
Brent Lee, First Vice President
Cheryl Greathouse, Second Vice President
Georggina Smith, Immediate Past President
Derek Poarch, Ex-Officio

APCO International standards are developed by APCO committees, projects, task forces, work-groups, and collaborative efforts with other organizations coordinated through the APCO International Standards Development Committee (SDC). Members of the committees are not necessarily members of APCO. Members of the SDC are not required to be APCO members. All members of APCO's committees, projects, and task forces are subject matter experts who volunteer and are not compensated by APCO. APCO standards activities are supported by the Communications Center & 9-1-1 Services Department of APCO International.

For more information regarding
APCO International and APCO standards please visit:
www.apcointl.org
www.apcostandards.org

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)
APCO American National Standards (ANS) are voluntary consensus standards. Use of any APCO standard is voluntary. This standard does not imply that there are no other minimum qualifications related to public safety communications training officers. All standards are subject to change. APCO ANS are required to be reviewed no later than every five years. The designation of an APCO standard should be reviewed to ensure you have the latest edition of an APCO standard, for example:

APCO ANS 3.101.1-2007 = 1- Operations, 2- Technical, 3- Training

APCO ANS 3.101.1-2007 = Unique number identifying the standard

APCO ANS 3.101.1-2007 = The edition of the standard, which will increase after each revision

APCO ANS 3.101.1-2007 = The year the standard was approved and published, which may change after each revision.

The latest edition of an APCO standard cancels and replaces older versions of the APCO standard. Comments regarding APCO standards are accepted any time and can be submitted to standards@apcointl.org, if the comment includes a recommended change, it is requested to accompany the change with supporting material. If you have a question regarding any portion of the standard, including interpretation, APCO will respond to your request following its policies and procedures. ANSI does not interpret APCO standards; they will forward the request to APCO.

APCO International adheres to ANSI's Patent Policy. Neither APCO nor ANSI is responsible for identifying patents for which a license may be required by an American National Standard or for conducting inquiries into the legal validity or scope of any patents brought to their attention.

No position is taken with respect to the existence or validity of any patent rights within this standard. APCO is the sole entity that may authorize the use of trademarks, certification marks, or other designations to indicate compliance with this standard.

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)
Permission must be obtained to reproduce any portion of this standard and can be obtained by contacting APCO International's Communications Center & 9-1-1 Services Department. Requests for information, interpretations, and/or comments on any APCO standards should be submitted in writing addressed to:

**APCO SDC Secretary, Communications Center & 9-1-1 Services**
APCO International
351 N. Williamson Blvd
Daytona Beach, FL 32114 USA
standards@apcointl.org

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)*
A Letter from the APCO International Emerging Technologies Committee Chair*

On behalf of public safety communications professionals across the nation, the Emerging Technologies Committee has diligently worked to research, review and write a standard for the Use of Social Media in Public Safety communications. The focus of this publication is to provide agencies with information regarding how social media can be used as an asset in emergency situations and also provide guidance for the use of social media by personnel.

Many hours were volunteered by numerous subject matter experts to develop this standard. It is important to recognize the time and effort APCO members have dedicated to updating this important standard.

The Emerging Technologies Committee, made up of a group of working public safety communications professionals from various size agencies and backgrounds, as well as private sector members, reviewed and compiled the information for this standard. The final draft was then submitted to the APCO Standards Development Committee (SDC) to begin the APCO American National Standards (ANS) Process.

Responding to the valid needs of our members while dealing with the rapidly expanding and ever-changing service environment, the public review and comment period is one of the most important steps in the standard development process. This provides an opportunity for each of you to review and contribute. We appreciate all feedback and comments related to the final draft of this resource. Please assist in disseminating this candidate standard to those that may be interested and encourage comments to be submitted. This collaboration of industry experts can only increase the high degree of professionalism we all seek within our agencies and throughout our profession.

Sincerely,

Karen Allen
APCO International Emerging Technologies Operations Subcommittee Chair

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)
Acknowledgements*

At the time this version was written, the Emerging Technologies Operational Sub-Committee included the following membership:

Karen Allen, Subcommittee Chair  
City of Tempe, Arizona

Barry Furey – First Subcommittee Chair  
Raleigh-Wake 911 Center, North Carolina

Ron Bloom, ENP, Subcommittee Vice Chair  
PSAP Concepts and Solutions, Illinois

Jim Coleman, Emerging Technologies Chair  
Washington Parish Communications District, Louisiana

Gordon Chinander  
Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (St Paul-Minneapolis), Minnesota

Pete Eggimann, ENP  
Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (St Paul-Minneapolis), Minnesota

Robert Ehrlich, ENP  
NY / NH Emergency Operations, New York

Brian Handlin  
New Castle County DPS Emergency Communications, Delaware

David Hopkins  
Steuben County 9-1-1, Bath, New York

Todd Piett, ENP  
Rave Mobile Safety, Massachusetts

Lance Terry  
Norman Communications, Oklahoma

Jeff Vezina, ENP  
DSS Corporation, Michigan
Steve Willoughby, ENP
9-1-1 Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, Oklahoma

Crystal McDuffie, ENP, RPL
APCO International

Jay English
APCO International

Steve Leese
APCO International

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)*
APCO Standards Development Committee (SDC)*

Frank Kiernan, Chair
Meriden Emergency Communications, CT

Sherry Taylor, Vice Chair
Indianapolis Fire Department Communications Division, IN

Dr. Daniel Devasirvatham
Battelle Energy Alliance, ID

Chris Fischer
APCO Past President, WA

Mark J. Fletcher, ENP
AVAYA, NJ

Jason Friedburg
EmergenSee, PA

Debbie Gailbreath, RPL
Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, FL

James Leyerle
OnStar, MI

Nate McClure
AECOM, VA

Daniel Morelos
Tucson Airport Authority, AZ

Jerry Schlesinger
City of Portland, OR

Bradford S. Smith
Framingham Fire Department, MA

Judith Weshinsky-Price
Amarillo Emergency Communications Center, TX

Crystal McDuffie, ENP, RPL, Secretary
APCO International

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)
Acronyms and Abbreviations*
For the purposes of this ANS, the following definitions of acronyms apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHJ</td>
<td>Authority Having Jurisdiction (Typically called “Agency”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANS</td>
<td>American National Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSI</td>
<td>American National Standard Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCO</td>
<td>Association of Public Safety Communications Officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>American Sign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAP</td>
<td>Public Safety Answering Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Standards Development Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Scope
Social media is a common form of communication used by agencies and agency employees. This standard provides guidance on the use of social media for developing specific local procedures (ex: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, etc).

1.2 Purpose
Different forms of social media can be an effective tool for agencies. Social Media also has the potential to be a significant risk to effective communications and data privacy. Because of the broad spectrum of applications, and the potential impact of the use of social media by agencies, it is necessary to thoroughly evaluate each use and document standards. Even if an agency elects not to use this form of communication, proper operational procedures need to be developed and appropriately communicated for both official and personal use of social media.

The purpose of this standard is to provide a consistent foundation for agencies to develop specific operational procedures and competencies. This standard recognizes the need for each agency to customize specific procedures to their local environment.

1.3 Human Resources and the agency legal department should review all social media policies and procedures.

Chapter 2: Definitions/Dictionary

2.1 Social Media – Any of a number of integrated web-based technology tools that allow users to generate their own content and share that content through various connections (ex: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, etc).

Chapter 3: Agency Use of Social Media for Emergency and Non-Emergency Reporting

3.1 Scope
Agencies considering the use of social media for citizens to request emergency or non-emergency calls for service should create policy and/or procedure(s). This chapter will provide guidance to agencies when creating their policy and/or procedure(s).

3.2 Agencies shall promote the use of dialing 9-1-1 as the primary means for the reporting of emergencies.

3.2.1 Agencies shall discourage the public from using social media to report emergencies.

3.2.2 On any agency sponsored social media site, the agency shall clearly post the emergency phone number and non-emergency phone number for contacting the agency.
3.3 Any official agency sponsored social media site or page shall be clearly identified with the following phrase: “Official social media site of ‘agency name’.”

3.3.1 The words “social media site” may be exchanged with a specific brand or site name (example “Official Facebook page of ‘agency name’.”)

3.4 Consolidated 9-1-1 centers must work with the agencies that they dispatch for to ensure that a consistent message is relayed to assist citizens understanding of where and how to request assistance.

3.5 The agency shall clearly identify if the social media site or page is monitored by the agency for the reporting of non-emergencies.

3.5.1 The following phrase should be prominently displayed on the site: “This site IS MONITORED by ‘agency name’ for the reporting of NON-EMERGENCIES ONLY - DIAL 9-1-1 TO REPORT EMERGENCIES.”

3.5.2 Any site or page that is monitored by the agency for reporting of non-emergencies shall be monitored 24/7/365.

3.6 When posting a non-emergency phone number, agencies shall take precautions to avoid a Denial of Service attack.

3.7 Any site or page that is not monitored by the agency for the reporting of emergencies and non-emergencies shall indicate it with the following phrase: “This site IS NOT MONITORED by ‘agency name’ for the reporting of emergencies or non-emergencies.”

3.7.1 Agencies that do not monitor the agency sponsored social media sites shall include instructions for the proper reporting of emergencies and non-emergencies.

3.7.2 The agency shall define and provide examples of what constitutes a non-emergency within their local jurisdiction.

3.7.3 The agency should reference existing laws, policies, and public education initiatives within the local jurisdiction.

3.7.4 Agencies that monitor any social media site for reporting of non-emergencies only shall fully comply with section 3.7 and its subsections.

3.8 Agencies shall have procedures in place for evaluating and responding to emergencies and non-emergencies received via any agency sponsored social media site or page.

3.8.1 Agencies should have procedures for emergencies and non-emergencies received via social media sites or pages that do not include location information.
3.8.1.1 Agencies should have procedures in place to verify locations of emergencies and non-emergencies received via social media pages or sites.

3.8.2 Agencies should refer to current policies for handling the call for service.

3.8.3 Agencies should have a policy that requires a notation in the call for service indicating that it was received through social media (ex: Twitter, Facebook, etc).

3.8.4 Agencies shall have social media site procedures for handling emergencies and non-emergencies reported by non-English or other customers that need additional translation services.

3.9 Agencies should develop policies covering the use of abbreviations, local vernacular and colloquialism.

Chapter 4: Agency Recording/Retention

4.1 Scope
As with 9-1-1 calls, agencies should determine what and how to record/archive information received through social media.

4.2 Agencies should record/archive, for historical/legal purposes; any information (bi-directional) posted and received via social media sites in accordance with existing policies for the recording and archiving of agency related information.

4.2.1 Commercial social media tools are available for recording information from social media sites.

4.3 Agencies should place a disclaimer on the site indicating that information included in posts and originating device identification information are subject to public record requirements, may be monitored and may be recorded/archived.

Chapter 5: Agency use of Social Media for Administrative Functions

5.1 Scope
Social media is an effective tool for reaching out to a broad audience. When doing so, agencies should consider creating policies outlining when and how social media will be integrated into administrative functions.

5.2 The agency should develop policies for posting job recruitments on the social media site(s) and how potential applicants may apply.

5.3 The agency should designate a minimum of one person and a backup who are responsible for updating, reviewing and determining what type of information is posted on the site. The agency should also identify a backup person for vacations, and time off.
5.3.1 Examples include, but are not limited to: public education information, such as when to change smoke detector batteries on smoke detectors, Amber alerts, announcements of community events and other public notifications.

5.4 The agency should work with their Human Resources to develop a policy on how to use social media for investigative purposes during background checks.

Chapter 6: Agency use of Social Media during an Incident

6.1 Scope
Social media is an invaluable tool when used in conjunction with incidents. This has been shown in a variety of large and small-scale incidents around the world. This section recommends policies to ensure it is used in an effective and appropriate manner.

6.2 Use during an active incident for communication to citizens

6.2.1 Agencies should develop policies that address the protocols and use of social media during an active incident to include:

6.2.1.1 The proper logging and archival of any use of social media received and responded to (bi-directional)

6.2.1.2 When social media will be used to communicate with the public, who is responsible for those communications, and an approval chain of command for any external messages.

6.2.1.3 Procedures for interfacing with fusion centers or other entities to eliminate overlap in responsibilities or public communication.

6.3 Use during an active incident for research/investigation

6.3.1 Agencies should develop policies that address social media access / use by 9-1-1 center employees during an incident for research and investigation to include:

6.3.1.1 Validation of the source of information before acting on it

6.3.1.2 Proper logging and archival of any use of social media and related information collected.

6.3.2 If agencies utilize social media for research and investigation during an incident, they should establish policies around use of that information during an incident (e.g.: finding next of kin, witnesses to a crime and/or any other additional details about an incident)

6.4 Use following an incident

6.4.1 To keep calls away from the 9-1-1 center, agencies should develop a policy regarding use of social media / posting of public information after an incident has been completed or for ongoing investigations to include:

6.4.1.1 The resolution of the incident and key contacts for additional information or questions
6.4.1.2 Updates and direction on who to contact after the incident for additional information or to provide information for ongoing investigations

Chapter 7: Employee Personal Social Media use (On-Duty or Off-Duty)

7.1 Scope
People around the world use social media in all manners, such as sharing what is happening to them at a moment in time, what they have witnessed, and to comment on events/occurrences that have occurred. Agencies should determine how and when it should be used by employees. This section provides considerations to include.

7.2 Agencies shall develop policies that address the use of social media by employees, which should be in accordance with existing information release policies, to include:

7.2.1 Prohibiting the on-duty use from interfering with job requirements.

7.2.2 Protocols (approval levels) and type of information that is permissible for posting

7.2.3 Prohibiting the release of any media (pictures, video, audio recordings) obtained during the performance of an employee’s duties or any agency related activities unless prior written approval is obtained.

7.2.4 Prohibiting the posting or release of any HIPAA protected and/or CJIS restricted information.

7.2.5 Prohibit the release of information that may be used for personal identification.

7.2.6 What employee related details may or may not be released without appropriate approval (ie: officer/firefighter involved fatalities, officer involved shootings, etc)

7.2.7 Prohibiting the release of any information related to ongoing or closed criminal investigations.

7.2.8 Prohibiting the identification of the employee’s employer.

7.2.9 Prohibit photographs of the center, employee in uniform or co-workers without employer permission.

7.2.10 Prohibit the violation of Human Resources policies such as harassment and sexual harassment.

7.2.11 The measures/discipline available in the event of a violation.
Chapter 8: Agency use of Social Media during a Major Event or Emergency Management

8.1 Scope
Social media can be a tool to provide information to the public and to receive information from the public. If an agency is going to take advantage of this tool, policies and/or procedures should be in place to identify how that will occur. This section provides guidance when preparing those policies and procedures.

8.2 Agencies should consider preplanning with their surrounding agencies to combine policy, procedures and manpower.

8.3 Agencies should consider how to encourage the public to sign up to receive notifications

8.4 Agencies should identify how frequently information will or should be communicated.

8.5 Agencies should develop policies that address under which circumstances social media will be used to communicate emergency information and clearly post the policy for citizens

8.6 Agencies should develop policies for monitoring and responding to social media posts from citizens during an emergency. Citizens expect immediate information. If agencies do not provide the needed information, the public will seek it from other entities.

8.6.1 Policy developers should consider how information such as shelter locations, preparedness and specific event emergency phone numbers will be communicated.

8.6.2 Agencies should identify who is authorized to approve and/or communicate the identified information on each social media site.

8.6.3 Agencies should identify who will monitor agency sponsored social media posts in an emergency to ensure timely responses are communicated.

8.6.4 Agencies should consider tools that provide automated answering, when appropriate, to assist with manpower and quick response to social media posts. These tools respond based on the context received.

8.7 Agencies should develop policies to address false posts and rumor control—such as others posting information that negatively affects the 9-1-1 Center.

8.8 Agencies should consider the use of Virtual Operations Support Teams (VOST) to assist with monitoring and responding to social media postings.

END of APCO ANS
1.112.1-2014
*Notes*

*Informative material and not a part of this American National Standard (ANS)*