

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN  
BOARD POLICY**

**POLICY:** Social Media Policy

**AUTHORITY:** Board resolution dated September 7, 2023

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) follows a consistent approach to the use of Social Media accounts by elected officials and staff.

**PURPOSE**

This policy is intended to:

- Ensure RDOS Board of Directors and staff are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities when using Social Media;
- Define expectations for the public when interacting with RDOS Social Media Channels; and
- Encourage a balanced, objective, and respectful online dialogue and information sharing with the public.

Social Media provides opportunities for the RDOS to engage with a wide audience. Social Media can be a vital tool for directly communicating with the public during emergencies and can be a useful tool to achieve RDOS public engagement and communications goals. This can increase public awareness of the projects and services provided by the RDOS to communities and the citizens.

The primary goals for using Social Media are:

- Increasing public awareness and access to the RDOS in an engaging and convenient manner;
- Providing better customer service through two-way dialogue with communities, including sharing time-sensitive information, correcting misinformation, and providing updates on service changes;
- Enhancing the reputation and image of the RDOS;
- Gathering feedback and facilitating conversations for stronger two-way communication with the public; and
- Building trust and strengthening relationships with residents, partners, and neighbours.

**REFERENCE:**

- [Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [Information System Use](#)
- [Area Director and Peripheral Website](#)
- [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

**DEFINITIONS:**

“RDOS” means the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

**“Social Media”** means forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

**“RDOS Social Media Channels”** means official RDOS accounts created and maintained and typically hosted on third-party platforms (i.e.: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn).

## **1. Use of Social Media by RDOS Staff:**

### 1.1. Corporate Use

The RDOS has approved Social Media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. The Manager of Legislative Services must approve the creation of any new Social Media accounts. Only designated staff may post to RDOS Social Media accounts.

Volunteer Fire Departments within the RDOS administer their own Social Media accounts. Fire Department personnel are not permitted to speak on behalf of the RDOS and must comply with the guidelines set out in this policy.

1.1.1. The RDOS Social Media presence will be engaging, frequent, responsive, and visual – more than just the automated distribution of a web notice. The RDOS will integrate Social Media into its communications strategies and engage meaningfully in its channels, on a regular basis.

1.1.2. Social Media is a complementary toolset in addition to traditional means of communication (such as websites, information releases, newsletters, posters, notices, print advertising, and email), in order to:

- Support and amplify messaging that is being produced; and
- Increase online traffic to the other means of communication including RDOS websites, public meetings, Board and committee meetings where direct engagement and public service can be provided.

1.1.3. Posts or comments by the public on RDOS Social Media Channels may be deleted subject to the terms and conditions of the Social Media platform on which they are posted.

1.1.4. In alignment with the RDOS Communication Plan, staff tasked with posting official RDOS content will only post it through the official RDOS Social Media accounts. Staff and Directors are encouraged to share posts from RDOS Social Media Channels rather than creating new posts on their own Social Media accounts. Staff are not to post or comment in any unofficial or unverified community groups, profile pages, or other such types of accounts on behalf of the RDOS.

1.1.5. Designated RDOS staff monitor and respond to questions received through RDOS Social Media Channels. It is expected that the designated staff liaise with the appropriate department and subject matter experts prior to posting a response. Social Media responses should be limited to factual information. RDOS staff must not post personal opinions or enter into policy discussions.

- 1.1.6. RDOS staff who are designated to use RDOS Social Media are not recommended to directly link their personal Social Media site profile to RDOS Social Media Channels, unless they feel confident about their knowledge of the specific Social Media platform. Linking a personal site to an employer's site forms a professional connection, via Social Media, thus an exchange of information may also take place and staff should take a proactive approach and educate themselves about applicable privacy settings beforehand.
- 1.1.7. Users are not permitted to use company email as login accounts for personal Social Media sites.
- 1.1.8. Log-in credentials for all Social Media accounts shall be provided to Information Services and shared with the RDOS Communications Supervisor.
- 1.1.9. Lapsed Social Media accounts should be deleted or, if the information is important as a public record, archived for records management purposes, then updated (where possible) to contain a final post and biographic details (the "About" information under a profile). This will direct people to RDOS Social Media Channels, advising that the account is no longer active.

## 1.2 Emergency Operations

- 1.2.1. The RDOS has one Social Media account (Twitter) that is active mainly during emergency events to support communications from the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). This account may retweet information during non-emergency times if the content is related to emergency management planning (preventative measures, preparedness measures, response and recovery related information). In the event the RDOS is hosting an event related to emergency management planning, scheduled outside of an active emergency response, the content will be posted from the corporate accounts and retweeted from the Emergency Operations Centre account.

## 2. Adherence to Legislation, Policies and Practices

- 2.1. All RDOS Social Media Channels shall adhere to applicable local, provincial and federal laws, regulations and policies including the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) and the following RDOS policies:

- [Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [Information System Use](#)
- [Area Director and Peripheral Website](#)
- [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination](#)

- 2.2. All information posted to, or deleted from RDOS Social Media Channels shall be permanently recorded off-line, in order to satisfy requirements of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

## 3. Staff responsibilities

### A) Communications Supervisor

The responsibilities of the RDOS Communications Supervisor with respect to Social Media shall include:

- recommend and authorize, with the Manager of Legislative Services, the creation/deletion of Social Media accounts and pages;
- create and delete RDOS Social Media accounts with the approval of the Manager of Legislative Services;
- manage and monitor official RDOS Social Media accounts;
- coach and advise departments on the use of Social Media as part of their communications and marketing activities;
- review RDOS Social Media pages for content and edit that content where appropriate;
- use available technologies to scan external Social Media sites and pages to monitor references to the RDOS in online conversations;
- measure key metrics that indicate citizen engagement with, and use of, RDOS Social Media pages, and report on those measurements to the Senior Management Team and the RDOS Board as needed;
- coordinate Social Media training sessions for RDOS staff, volunteers, or Directors; and
- any other responsibilities the Manager of Legislative Services deems appropriate.

**B) Information Services**

The responsibilities of Information Services staff with respect to Social Media shall include:

- support the administration of RDOS Social Media accounts, and establish settings and security configurations;
- evaluate new technology options and recommend appropriate technologies to the Communications Supervisor and Manager of Legislative Services;
- host, in partnership with the Communications Supervisor, Social Media training sessions for RDOS staff, volunteers, or Directors; and
- any other responsibilities the CAO deems appropriate.

**C) RDOS employees with Social Media responsibilities**

Employees who are responsible for departmental Social Media accounts will have the following responsibilities:

- develop or source content intended for RDOS Social Media Channels, such as posts, photos or videos, following common practice in Social Media and according to RDOS standards;
- post to and maintain Social Media pages on behalf of their department;
- manage and monitor departmental Social Media accounts and pages;
- become familiar with all relevant guidelines and legislation;
- alert the Communications Supervisor of inappropriate content on Social Media pages; and
- attend Social Media training sessions.

**4. General engagement guidelines and summary**

- 4.1. Official RDOS Social Media accounts are used to amplify the reach of relevant notices and messaging to the RDOS, its citizens and other interested parties. The accounts will be active during regular business hours and may not be monitored at all times.
- 4.2. The RDOS reserves the right to restrict or remove any content or comments that are not on-topic to the original post, violate any of the definitions set out in the RDOS Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination policy, or that otherwise violate any of the Terms of Use as outlined by the Social Media platform on which the comment was made. The RDOS supports an inclusive, diverse, equitable and respectful work environment, free of discrimination and harassment. RDOS employees moderate RDOS Social Media Channels and their contents. Any conduct that is discriminatory or harassing will be removed and the user may be banned from future use of government channels.
- 4.3. Following common practice, if a relevant question is asked in the comments regarding a post, the answer will be posted as a reply to the question, in the same comments section. The RDOS will not respond to direct messages. The public will be encouraged to submit official or complex questions and concerns to [info@rdos.bc.ca](mailto:info@rdos.bc.ca) or by contacting the office directly either in person at 101 Martin Street, Penticton, or by calling 250-492-0237.
- 4.4. To the extent that the RDOS collects any personal information through a RDOS Social Media Channel, it will be handled according to the [RDOS Privacy Statement](#).
- 4.5. If a member of the public chooses to communicate with the RDOS through a Social Media platform, the user should be aware that the RDOS has no control over the Social Media site and therefore has no responsibility or liability for the manner in which the business collects, uses, discloses, secures or otherwise uses or treats the user's information. Some Social Media platforms may not comply with the same privacy laws, policies and practices that the RDOS follows.
- 4.6. Links to other websites may be included in an RDOS post. As an active participant in online conversations, the RDOS may follow affiliated organizations and may share content from those organizations if the material is aligned with the corporate values, programs, services or initiatives of the RDOS. Sharing content or following Social Media profiles does not imply endorsement of any kind.

The RDOS may promote events on its Social Media sites if the RDOS is involved as a participant, host or partner. The RDOS does not permit members of the public, contractors or community groups to promote events on RDOS Social Media Channels.

- 4.7. Social Media profiles and websites representing RDOS Directors are not official information channels on behalf of the RDOS. Directors should direct any questions from the shared RDOS content to RDOS Social Media Channels, and to contact RDOS administration for complex matters.