



Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Updated April 2026

As an employee or board member of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), your online actions and presence are important, even if you don't manage the organization's social media channels. This policy provides guidance on responsible social media use, both in personal and official capacities. Social media plays an important role in advancing the NVFC's mission, and all online activity should reflect the organization's professionalism, integrity, and commitment to the fire and emergency services.

You are responsible for your actions.

While the NVFC encourages employees and board members to maintain individual social media accounts if they choose, refrain from posting anything that could ultimately harm the NVFC's reputation. Remember to exercise sound judgment and common sense online.

Be aware when mixing work with your personal life.

You are free to identify yourself as an NVFC employee or board member in your individual social media profiles and to share NVFC content to your social media pages, but refrain from any language that indicates you are speaking for the NVFC through your personal social media accounts. Only official NVFC social media accounts can speak for the organization.

Remember that as an employee or board member, the content you post can reflect on the organization.

The NVFC respects the free speech rights of all its employees and board members, but remember that supervisors, colleagues, and the public often have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind when sharing or posting information or content that can be seen by more than just family or friends, and remember that information or content initially intended for just family and friends can be easily passed on.

Let the designated employees respond to negative content.

If you come across negative or disparaging posts or comments about the NVFC or any of its employees or representatives, avoid the temptation to react yourself. Pass the post(s) or comment(s) on to the NVFC communications team so they can determine the best course of action.

Be a scout for content.

Keep an eye out for content the NVFC could share or promote on social media. If you hear or watch something on the news or read something online that could be useful and/or interesting to the NVFC's members and followers, please send it to the communications team for possible posting on the NVFC's social media pages.

Using Social Media in an Official Capacity

Only designated staff members can post content coming from the NVFC's official social media accounts. When posting information to the NVFC's social media channels, you are acting as a

representative of the organization. There are certain standards and policies that anyone who manages the NVFC's social media presence should follow.

Be mindful that you represent the organization.

When interacting with the public through social media, be respectful and accepting of all individuals, races, religions, and cultures. How you conduct yourself in these situations reflects on the entire NVFC.

Do not tolerate spam or offensive content.

The NVFC does not tolerate content posted to our social media channels that we deem offensive or divisive in nature or that can be categorized as spam. We reserve the right to delete such posts or comments and ban users from our channels if necessary. In addition to offensive or divisive content, the NVFC does not tolerate posts or comments that include harassment, threats, misinformation, or guidance that could promote unsafe or harmful actions. Content that spreads false or misleading information, particularly related to emergency response, public safety, or health, may be removed. The NVFC reserves the right to take appropriate action to maintain a safe and respectful online environment.

Be mindful of misinformation.

Social media can rapidly spread inaccurate or misleading information. If incorrect information is shared on NVFC channels, it should be corrected promptly. When responding to misinformation from others, provide clear, factual information in a professional manner and direct individuals to credible sources when possible.

Be respectful and helpful when responding to criticism or complaints.

Unless the post is offensive, divisive, or spam, be respectful of the opinions expressed by others on the NVFC's social media channels and try to be helpful. Your response to criticisms against the organization should be informative and professional. Consider using the follow format:

- Let them know you heard the complaint: "We're sorry to hear..." or "We're sorry that you feel..."
- Inform: Provide them with as much relevant information as you can to respond to their comment or question.
- Offer: "If you have any further questions or concerns, please email..." or "If you need further information, check out this link..."

Sometimes it is better to address the comment in a direct message to the individual who made the complaint rather than in a public facing area such as the comments section. If you are unsure of how to respond or the best method for response, consult with the chief of communications.

Know when to disengage.

If you have responded to someone's complaint or criticism to the best of your abilities yet they continue to leave comments or send messages, do not engage further. It may be appropriate to hide or delete their comments or posts or ban the user from the NVFC's social media channels.

Use discretion when sharing outside content.

The NVFC frequently gets tagged in posts and receives requests to share posts from other sources. While it is fine to share posts that our members will find useful, first check where the post originated and read the full content of the post and any page it links to. If it seems suitable and relevant, it can be shared. Refrain from sharing content that disparages or is negative about the volunteer fire and emergency services or that contradicts NVFC values or viewpoints. The NVFC

typically doesn't share/promote outside or personal fundraising initiatives the NVFC isn't involved in as we can't verify the validity, but if there is reason an exception may be warranted then run the request by the chief of communications.

Best Practices for Social Media

Respond to all messages, comments, and mentions promptly.

Make sure you are responding to every message, comment, and mention that needs a response in at most one business day. Although not every comment or mention warrants a response, it may be appropriate to like or share that content to the organization's channels.

Make sure to tag partners and corporate members that are mentioned or included in a post.

Doing so lets them know that the NVFC is promoting their involvement and partnership while encouraging sharing and interaction on their part.

Do not post the same content across all channels.

Try to refrain from posting the same content at the same time across all the NVFC's channels. Instead, mix it up by changing the wording and date that content is posted (e.g., post to X on Monday and Facebook on Wednesday). Some content might not be relevant for followers on a specific channel and therefore does not need to be posted there. Also make sure the content is worded appropriately for the platform, such as using relevant hashtags for X posts.

Relax the wording.

The wording of social media posts does not need to be as formal as you would find in a newsletter or a press release. Keep it professional, but feel free to use a more relaxed tone, utilize conjunctions, and shorten words (especially on X, where this is sometimes a necessity).

Use images and videos as much as possible.

Research shows that posts with images or videos generate more engagement than those without, so use them whenever possible. Sometimes a link preview includes an image.

Research hashtags beforehand.

This ensures that the NVFC is not left out of conversations occurring on social media. It also prevents embarrassing or controversial [misuse of hashtags](#).

Use caution with user-generated content and screenshots.

Before sharing photos, videos, or screenshots from other users, ensure the content is appropriate, accurate, and does not violate privacy expectations. When possible, obtain permission from the original creator. Avoid sharing content that includes personally identifiable information, sensitive situations, or individuals who have not consented to being featured.

Social Media and Events

If you are attending an event as an NVFC representative, you might be asked to provide content for the organization's social media channels. Below are some guidelines to follow.

Be on the lookout for content.

Consider what about the event could be interesting, useful, or entertaining for the NVFC's followers. Depending on which type of event you are attending, there could be multiple opportunities for photos. Examples include the following.

Tradeshows:

- Your suitcases or bags at home
- Travel photos (i.e., airplane, train, etc.)
- Event welcome sign
- Event center signage
- NVFC empty booth space
- Event materials in open boxes
- NVFC booth post-set-up
- NVFC booth with visitors/NVFC representatives

Meetings:

- Conference room(s)
- Meeting attendees (with their permission)
- Award ceremonies (if applicable)
- Speakers, panels, and audience
- Agenda or program (even better if you or another attendee is holding the agenda)
- Group meals (if applicable)

Trainings:

- Demonstrations/live action shots
- Classroom presentations (instructors, audience)
- Training attendees
- Group events such as meals, breakout sessions, opening or closing sessions, etc.

Make sure your photographs and video are professional.

Remember that your photographs or videos will be posted to the NVFC's social media channels, so when shooting, keep in mind the following considerations.:

- While Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and X can utilize photos in either portrait (vertical) or landscape (horizontal) position, Instagram requires the portrait position.
- Make sure your photographs and videos are of high quality/resolution (i.e., not blurry, out of focus, shaky, poorly lit, etc.).
- Wipe off your camera lens to remove dirt, dust, or grease prior to taking the shot.
- Take multiple photographs of the same subject in case one does not come out well.

Email the content to the appropriate contact.

After you have determined which photographs or videos are appropriate for the NVFC's social media channels, please send them **along with a caption** or description to Brittney Deo at brittney@nvfc.org. Send all photos and videos while the event is happening, if possible, so that the content can be added to the NVFC's channels in real time. In addition to email, content may also be submitted through shared folders or cloud-based platforms (such as Google Drive or Dropbox) when available.

Note: If the NVFC is sending a representative (such as a director) to an event and no member of staff is present, the Social Media and Events portion of this document should be shared with them, and they should be encouraged to send social media content.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools may be used to support social media and communications efforts; however, all use must align with the NVFC's standards for accuracy, professionalism, and integrity.

You are responsible for AI-assisted content.

Content created with the assistance of AI is the responsibility of the individual using the tool. All AI-generated or AI-assisted content must be reviewed and approved prior to posting.

Ensure accuracy of all information.

AI tools can produce incorrect or outdated information. Always verify facts, statistics, and claims before publishing, especially for content related to safety, training, or emergency response.

Do not share sensitive or confidential information.

Do not input any confidential, proprietary, or personally identifiable information into AI tools. This includes member data, internal communications, or incident details that have not been publicly released.

Do not misrepresent content.

AI should not be used to create or share misleading or deceptive content. Avoid generating images, videos, or text that could be mistaken for real incidents if they are not authentic. If AI-generated content is used and could cause confusion, it should be clearly identified.

Maintain professionalism and integrity.

Content created using AI should reflect the professionalism of the NVFC and the fire and emergency services. Avoid exaggerated, unrealistic, or sensationalized portrayals.

Use AI as a support tool, not a replacement.

AI can assist with drafting, editing, and brainstorming, but it should not replace human judgment, expertise, or oversight. Never post AI-generated content without a detailed review.