

AP POLICY ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Associated Press is committed to ensuring the safety and security of its staff – in the field, at the office and online – and protecting the dignity and reputation of its employees as they carry out their work around the world. As part of that commitment, [AP provides the SAFE program](#) – a collection of guidance, resources, training and support services to staff as they work online and across social media. AP staff are strongly encouraged to raise any issues or problems they encounter online to their manager, to Human Resources, senior leadership or the SAFE team (safe@ap.org).

This policy applies to all AP employees and company representatives, such as freelancers and contractors. It replaces the AP Social Media Guidelines of 2013. Nothing in this policy is intended to abridge any rights provided by the National Labor Relations Act.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Many AP employees use social media as part of their job and in their life outside of the workplace. Many members of our staff use social media to build an audience, for professional development and to reach sources, clients and customers. Others use social media to connect with family, friends and the wider world.

This policy outlines acceptable use of social media at AP and by all AP employees, not just those who work in the News division. It also applies to contractors, freelancers and others who represent AP. It is designed to protect AP's staff, their reputation and safety, as well as that of the company.

In all cases, employees who are attacked or threatened on social media or online should report these incidents to management, Human Resources, senior leadership or the SAFE team (safe@ap.org), and take advantage of the resources AP provides to proactively prevent and combat online harassment.

More information about AP's SAFE online harassment program can be found [here](#), including how to report incidents and offer feedback.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees who do not need to use social media for their job have the option to not use social media.

No AP employee is required to post to social media from a personal account. For example, some journalists may need to maintain a Twitter account to follow sources and stay on top of breaking news, but it is acceptable for that journalist to never tweet if they so choose.

TRANSPARENCY ONLINE

Employees should identify themselves as AP staff in their social media profiles if they use the account proactively to report and seek information; to promote AP journalism, businesses or products; or otherwise publicly perform the work of an AP employee or company representative.

Employees may passively observe social media and online platforms without such disclosures if they are not actively engaging with anyone in those spaces, most notably when monitoring extremism or other activity online that carries the risk of harassment or threat.

Employees are strongly encouraged to discuss with their manager or supervisor the best approach to reporting online when doing so may give rise to concerns about their safety, or when they are working in environments of civil or social conflict.

POSTING AND SHARING

The use of social media by AP's employees is held to the same high standard as reporting, communication and distribution of AP content over any other medium. Those standards include but are not limited to:

- Avoiding expressions of opinion on contentious issues, even in supposedly private or password protected conversations
- Not disseminating rumors and unconfirmed reports
- Carefully verifying and attributing information and content before it is distributed
- Transparently correcting errors on all platforms on which the erroneous material was distributed

Employees can express themselves on social media but should consider a series of questions before doing so.

- What is your objective in posting your content and is social media the proper forum?
- Would you feel comfortable with someone surfacing your content and sharing it widely?
- Would you say the same thing in an AP story?
- Could your post endanger one of your colleagues or compromise their ability to work?
- Are you expressing views that could lead an average person to conclude that you or the AP can't be impartial?
- Are you exhibiting a pattern in your posts, likes or friends that could lead an average person to conclude that you can't be impartial?
- If your post is on a private account, could it still be interpreted as you speaking as an AP employee?

When posting to social media, employees must not share AP proprietary or confidential information or display political affiliations or preferences. Nothing in this policy places a limit on employees sharing information as part of a protected Guild activity.

DON'T BREAK NEWS

Employees should not use social media to break major news or share exclusive information or tips before AP publishes the information.

SHARING CONTENT FROM OTHERS

Employees should not share opinionated material from others. If an employee feels that sharing opinionated material is crucial for reporting purposes, they must add language that makes it clear they are reporting someone else's opinion.

AVOIDING AN APPEARANCE OF BIAS

Employees can connect with sources or newsmakers, but when doing so with politicians or political causes, should try to do so with accounts on all sides of a given issue or campaign.

Employees should not repeatedly like or share content with a particular point of view on controversial issues, as it can leave the impression that the staff member also holds that view.

The same is true for following social media accounts. For example, staff members should not repeatedly like or share stories about a particular political party.

AVOIDING POSSIBLE RISK

Employees should keep in mind that criticizing fellow users, newsmakers or anyone else can reflect badly on the AP and might endanger a colleague or otherwise hamper a colleague's ability to safely do their job.

Employees should not post about a missing, detained or at-risk AP employee without clearance and guidance from senior management. Social media posts can unwittingly put colleagues at risk and jeopardize company operations continents away.

SPORTS AND CELEBRITY

In social media posts related to sports and entertainment, employees can root for teams or make general comments about elements of popular culture such as movies, TV shows or music, but must refrain from insults or personal attacks directed at teams or individuals. Journalists engaged in sports or entertainment coverage must not publicly show favor to or criticize specific teams or individuals within their area of coverage.

CORRECTING ERRORS

If a social media post on an AP-branded account contains an error of fact, emphasis or tone, the post should be promptly removed from the platform where it occurred, followed by a note acknowledging the deletion and a corrected post issued where appropriate.

OTHER CONCERNS

Managers should not initiate social media connections with subordinates; otherwise, social media connections among AP employees are fine.

Employees may share content from other news organizations but should be mindful of potential competitive issues and refrain from sharing unconfirmed material. Employees should keep in mind that criticizing fellow users, newsmakers or anyone else can reflect badly on AP and may one day harm a colleague's ability to report freely and safely or get important information from a source.

Employees should refrain from using work-related social media accounts to seek customer service assistance. For example, a tweet about how an airline lost an employee's luggage could create a conflict for colleagues that cover that airline.

Employees should not, as a matter of course, respond to personal attacks on social media. If, however, an account is presenting erroneous information, staffers should consult their supervisor, Human Resources, senior leadership or the SAFE team (safe@ap.org) and discuss an appropriate response. Involving others serves multiple purposes, including giving the employee a sounding board and providing them with an additional level of protection. Employees should weigh whether any exchange will exacerbate the problem by inviting further negative response.

REVIEW

Social media is a constantly changing landscape. The AP and the News Media Guild agree to meet annually to review this policy and consider mutually agreeable revisions as needed.