



Social media allows the IAFF and its affiliates the opportunity to champion the union's mission on a global level. Each day, vital conversations occur on these online spaces that affect our brand – and it is imperative that we participate in them in the right way.

Anything published online, whether to a personal or professional account, could be seen by others and may be accessible even after it is deleted. That's why it is important to use caution when posting. Does your message reflect what you would say in person?

Responsibility is critical when using your personal social media, too. The public rarely separates a member from “the job.” While employers generally should not expect to control employees' use of these sites, you may face repercussions for information posted while off-duty. Courts have been unwilling to find that employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy with regard to information that an employee voluntarily posts online. The lesson: we're always accountable for what we post.

This guide is meant for IAFF affiliates who want to deliver an effective message using social media to their communities, elected officials, and the media.

The IAFF has published an extensive manual-
“**The Law and the Internet for IAFF Affiliates**” (IAFF.org/internet-law) that includes Frequently Asked Questions about online voting, use of social media and the internet, privacy rights, and more.

Have any questions?

Contact the Communications Division at [**feedback@iaff.org**](mailto:feedback@iaff.org).



IAFF Affiliates Outreach on Social Media

Have a Plan

- Devise a social media plan for your IAFF local and implement it. Ask yourself: what message do you want to convey about fire fighters to your community? Who do you want to connect with on your social media sites? What do you want to say?
- Determine what goals you want to achieve by using social media
- Determine who will be responsible for your social media outreach
- Determine how your social media goals will relate to your affiliate's overall strategic plans
- What do you want your social media outreach to look like?
- Be accurate and honest with everything you post online
- Don't post anything based on emotion or when feeling politically attacked. Stop and make sure that the message you post is consistent with the one set forth by your local's leadership.

Follow the Law

- Take responsibility for what you post online. Don't publish hearsay, innuendos, or confidential information that pertains to the union, fire department, media, or elected officials.
- Give proper credit for copyrighted images and other intellectual property you use on social networks.
- Avoid posting abusive, insubordinate, incendiary, or disloyal remarks (images) about elected leaders, fire departments, the media, or other fire fighters online.
- Always use your best judgment when posting something online because even if you delete information, it can still cache on your computer. If you feel unsure about posting something – listen to the warning bells. Seek the guidance of your IAFF leaders in your local, state, and even your district vice president, if necessary.
- Be mindful of where you use social media. Today many fire departments are cracking down on fire fighters use of social media in the fire stations. Be aware of any rules concerning using social while on the job.

Personal Use of Social Media

Much of the same information useful for local affiliates applies to personal accounts, too.

- Be conscious of mixing your personal life and professional life online. These are likely to intersect, but remember, you cannot guarantee that what you say will only be seen by friends. Posts can be screenshotted, forwarded, and seen by those other than those whom you originally intended.
- Take responsibility for what you post online. Don't publish hearsay, innuendos, or confidential information that pertains to the union, fire department, media, or elected officials.
- Avoid posting abusive, insubordinate, incendiary, or disloyal remarks (images) about elected leaders, fire departments, the media, or other fire fighters online.
- Avoid posting anything that will put you under scrutiny by your employer. When in doubt, do not post it.
- Use your best common sense when posting online because even if you delete information, it can still cache on your computer. If you feel unsure about posting something – listen to the warning bells.
- Be mindful of where you use social media. Many fire departments are cracking down on fire fighters' use of social media in the fire stations. Be aware of any rules concerning using social media while on duty.

The IAFF Communications Division can assist your local with establishing a social media plan.

Contact us at feedback@iaff.org.