

POLICY TITLE: PRESS RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
POLICY NUMBER: 5100

5100.1 Purpose. The purpose of the press relations and social media policy is to work supportively with press relations (media) and to disseminate information of public interest and concern in an accurate, complete, and timely manner. Public Relations and Social Media are vital in outreach efforts that help engage the community quickly and relevantly. It allows stakeholders to communicate with the District and quickly access important information. The District currently manages social media activities across several platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This policy will establish clear guidelines for the appropriate use of current policies, which may be updated from time to time and future press relations and social media activities.

5100.2 Press Relations and Social Media Use. The District will use press relations and social media to share timely, relevant information that keeps stakeholders up to date on what is happening in the District and with water in his or her community. The goal of social media activity will be to share information about District subjects, events, reminders, District updates, or other District press relations and informal notices. Social media shall also share critical information that needs to reach stakeholders quickly. The use of social media is to complement but not replace other communication methods regarding District activities and business.

1. The General Manager or his/her designee is designated as the District's Public Information Officer (PIO) and is responsible for implementing this policy. When the PIO is unavailable, he or she shall select an authorized designee.
2. The PIO shall coordinate District responses with the Board President to ensure the District meets the Board of Director's communications goals.
3. Employees and elected officials who engage with consumers or members of the Press shall use courtesy, politeness, and professionalism. Any media inquiries received by district staff will be referred immediately to Department Directors or the General Manager (if any Department Director is unavailable), who shall directly forward the media inquiry and contact information to the PIO and Board President (as necessary) for a response.
4. The General Manager, the Board President, or his/her designee will prioritize inquiries from the news media and respond as efficiently as possible.
5. When contacted by the PIO for information needed to respond to a media inquiry, all staff shall provide the PIO with accurate and complete information available for the response. The General Manager or Designee will identify if additional time is needed to address a media inquiry.
6. At the discretion of the PIO and the Board President, if it is determined that a District response is best achieved by having staff or a consultant speak on behalf of the District on a particular topic, he or she may designate an authorized spokesperson to assist with the District's response.
7. To assure that all members of the Board of Directors have accurate, complete, and timely information to fulfill responsibilities to represent the District affairs, members of the Board of Directors shall inform the PIO by email of the substance of significant media inquiries and for an official response.
8. The General Manager must approve official BCVWD social media accounts before being established. The PIO and the assigned social media administrators will manage or post on social media platforms.

9. Content shared on District social media platforms shall comply with Section 5100.6 below. "Content" includes, but is not limited to, posts, shares, comments, likes, intentions, and reactions.
10. While an informal tone is appropriate, communication via social media represents the District and shall remain professional. Official District social media shall not be used for political purposes, conduct private commercial transactions, engage in private business activities, or other personal use. Inappropriate use of official District social media may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
11. Assigned staff and management shall monitor and evaluate social media platforms on an ongoing basis.

5100.3 Personal Use of Social Media.

1. District employees and the Board of Directors may have personal accounts on any social media platform of his or her choice. These accounts shall remain private and shall not be used to share work-related information.
2. District employees and the Board of Directors shall avoid using personal accounts to comment on posts regarding official District business.
3. District email accounts and passwords shall not be used with personal social media accounts.

5100.4 General Policies.

1. All District accounts shall clearly state they are maintained by the District and include the official logo. The assigned social media administrator will fully understand and comply with user agreements for each social media platform. Administrators will also comply with state and federal regulations and District policies.
2. Social media content shall reflect the District's mission, vision, values, and initiatives. The BCVWD assigned consultant or the assigned social media administrator should monitor social media accounts, content, and conversations on a frequent, ongoing basis. Images may not include photos of a person or private property without written consent.
3. Model releases shall be used to obtain the permission of identifiable people. Images, videos, and graphics that do not belong to the District must be vetted to ensure copyright laws do not protect him or her or that the intended use falls within fair-use standards.
4. The District shall cite the source of any image, graphic, or video not owned by the District. Free-use photos can be found using stock photography sites or advanced search engine features.
5. Social Media accounts, including the administrative account access, shall be established, controlled, and managed by BCVWD Information Technology Department with the direction and approval of the General Manager or his/her designee.

5100.5 Correcting Misinformation.

Responding to public comments or questions and diffusing potentially harmful conversations is a critical component of social media management. The social media administrator shall conduct frequent reviews of social media accounts, correct any misinformation, and notify the General Manager or designee immediately in the event

of an adverse situation. If the situation cannot be resolved, the social media administrator will publicly provide District contact information or other resources and follow up with stakeholders privately regarding his or her concerns.

5100.6 Content Policies. Social media content shall be posted consistently, regularly, and with timely and relevant information. Posts shall be scheduled in advance while also allowing flexibility to implement changes and share urgent information quickly and efficiently.

1. Posts can include but are not limited to: emergencies; water supply and conservation information; District updates on initiatives, objectives, and projects; community engagement; leaks, service outages, maintenance/repairs; press releases, holiday closures, and more.
2. Social media administrators shall use the best judgment when posting or engaging on platforms and determining what is suitable to share on behalf of the District. Topics to avoid include legal claims or lawsuits, personnel matters, controversial issues, personal opinions, and political issues.
3. When applicable, content shall be explicitly tailored to each platform's audience and user experience. For example, platforms such as Nextdoor provide an opportunity to engage with a population interested in safety, events, and community. In contrast, platforms such as Instagram provide a way to connect with stakeholders in a fun, visually-based manner. Facebook allows an image with more detail than platforms like Twitter, but both enable linking to additional information.
4. Information shall be relevant to the District's intended audience, presented clearly, and easily understood. Content shall always include proper grammar, spelling, and appropriate tone. The social media administrator will always check facts before posting any information.

5100.7 Prohibited Content. Responses from the public that include prohibited content will be removed at the discretion of the General Manager or his/her designee. District staff and representatives of BCVWD who violate this policy and any social media accounts that violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Content containing any of the following material will be removed immediately. Inappropriate content includes, but is not limited to:

1. Violence, profanity, obscenity, nudity, or pornographic content or language,
2. The content is found to discriminate against any creed, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or national origin, as well as any other category protected by state or federal laws,
3. Threats, slander, or defamation of any kind,
4. Illegal acts of any kind or encouragement thereof,
5. Information that compromises the security or well-being of any District staff member, partner, resident, or stakeholder,
6. Comments, links, posts, advertisements, or articles soliciting business or commerce,
7. Content that violates copyright laws, or

8. Content that violates local, state, or federal laws.

5100.8 Emergency Response. Social media use shall be limited to the District's PIO, Board President, or as authorized, Board members or designated spokespeople in an emergency or crisis scenario. Social media activities shall occur to announce an emergency, provide updates during the emergency, and share when the emergency is resolved. The District's emergency updates are not intended to take responsibility for emergency communications for regional emergencies; rather, the District will communicate information specifically relating to the District and water service.

5100.9 State Regulations. All District content, including social media posts, comments, messages, and other interactions, shall be mindful of and comply with the following state regulations:

1. **California Public Records Act.** All social media content found on BCVWD accounts may be subject to the California Public Records Act. Content posted-- including prohibited and non-prohibited content, responses to comments, and messages from the public-- shall be monitored, tracked, and retained so that it can be easily retrieved if necessary, according to Public Record Act laws.
2. **Ralph M. Brown Act.** The Brown Act protects the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies, such as meetings held by a Board of Directors. All Brown Act rules shall be followed when engaging online, including on social media. Interactions between Board members on social media platforms, including comments and messages, can be regarded as a meeting. The Board of Directors is encouraged to follow the Brown Act when engaging in posts or discussions.
3. **Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC).** The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) is designed to ensure the fairness and integrity of California's political process by enforcing the Political Reform Act. Regulations state that all Board members must be represented equally regarding public outreach, media relations, and social media. Use of pictures, quotes, or other social media content involving Board members must comply with FPPC regulations.

5100.10 Ongoing Evaluation. The District shall continuously review social media accounts to ensure alignment with the District Board of Directors' policy direction and District-defined mission, vision, directives, and policies and procedures. District issues identified by staff that are not aligned with the said mission, vision, directives, and policies and procedures shall be corrected, deleted, or adjusted.

5100.11 Personal Opinion. The Board of Directors members and District Employees have the right to express an opinion regarding matters of public concern. Members of the Board of Directors and District employees who write correspondence to media or post on social media platforms may not use official district stationary or items symbolizing a direct connection to BCVWD. If a member of the Board of Directors or BCVWD employee identifies as a district representative on a Personal Opinion correspondence, email, or social media posts, he or she shall state that his or her outlined views do not represent the views of the District but of the individual's opinion.