

UDOT SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

SOCIAL CONTENT GUIDELINES

All content on UDOT’s social channels should promote UDOT’s goals and emphasis areas. In general, if the content doesn’t fit into one of the following charts, it is not appropriate to post:

UDOT Goal	Topics for Social Channels
Zero Fatalities	Safety messages, seat belts, speed limits, work zone safety
Preserve Infrastructure	Projects, maintenance, planned roadway restrictions related to construction work, innovation
Optimize Mobility	Projects, studies, traffic signals, planned and unplanned roadway restrictions, real time traffic information, event traffic info, innovation

UDOT Emphasis Area	Topics for Social Channels
Integrated Transportation	Multi-modal transportation, bicycling, pedestrian issues, transit, complete streets, safe walking and biking to school
Collaboration	Work with partnering agencies and local governments: cities, counties, MPOs, UTA
Education	STEM outreach and community service and/or sharing links to project websites where people can learn more about what we do, i.e. “How a bridge is built,” or “How traffic signals are coordinated”
Transparency	Info on decisions and decision-making processes; data sharing
Quality	Awards and recognitions
Innovation	New approaches and techniques being utilized on projects; efforts by employees to be innovative

In addition to the subject matter, the tone of UDOT social media outreach is of paramount importance. The following guidelines should be strictly observed for both original postings and responses:

- Remember at all times that you are representing a high profile state government agency, and through that agency, the governor of the state of Utah.
- Be polite, respectful and courteous.
- Be friendly and conversational, but still professional.
- Avoid sarcasm or colloquialisms.
- There is no place in UDOT social media for “snarky” comments, or comments that are condescending, snide, critical or anything less than completely professional.

Keep in mind that as an extension of the public forum, all social media interactions are obtainable to the public via GRAMA request. Each platform has a built in archive system, and should be retained for that purpose.

RESPONSE POLICY

Choosing to employ social media means taking on the responsibility to field questions and respond to comments. Social media provides a venue for two-way and interactive communication, and it is important that UDOT does its best to respond to comments, questions and queries in a timely manner, (ideally within one business day.) Failure to do so may damage UDOT's reputation with the public and harm its efforts to be transparent and approachable.

Not every comment requires a response. Facebook, in particular, should be seen as a public forum where the public can interact, ask questions and in some cases provide answers (often from a third-party source, thereby giving UDOT credibility). UDOT should answer questions from the public and respond where appropriate, but should not sacrifice quality or accuracy for the sake of immediacy. It will often be appropriate to respond with, "We are looking into your concerns and will get back to you with an answer."

Sensitivity is required to know when a response is appropriate. Sometimes even negative comments should be allowed to stand without response. This is especially true when members of the public are simply expressing an opinion – even a negative one. People are allowed to disagree with UDOT and the decisions we make and approaches we take. Once we have explained our position, we don't need to continue defending or explaining it. Allow commenters to express themselves without being defensive.

Deleting comments from social media should be done rarely and with care. A statement should be included in the page's description that indicates vulgar, profane, crude or hateful comments will not be tolerated. Any comment deleted should be retained on file with an explanation of why it was deleted.

As a matter of policy:

- Hate speech – defined as language that expresses hate or encourages or condones violence toward a person or group based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender or sexual orientation – will not be tolerated in our social media postings and should be immediately deleted.
- Similarly, profanity, vulgarity, crudeness, rudeness and unkind comments toward UDOT, our partners or other commenters are not to be tolerated and should be deleted.
- Advertising inserted into a conversation thread should be deleted.
- Do not engage with commenters who are belligerent or not adding to the conversation.
- If a valid complaint or concern is expressed, respond to the situation quickly and try to address the concern through more direct communication, such as private message or email.
- Do not engage with stakeholders who are asking off topic questions or are not contributing to the conversation.
- There's no need to be defensive. Focus on facts, UDOT's vision, mission and goals.
- If a question arises about a project that has its own social page, redirect the question or concern and let the administrator of that page answer the question.

After Hours Response

Credibility on social media platforms is established by providing accurate information in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to respond to questions/concerns through social media as soon as possible. Account administrators will work to determine what a reasonable and obtainable response time can be, (Ideally no longer than one business day). A statement in the account description should indicate when the account is monitored, and when users can expect a response. *(Example: This account is monitored during business hours. Questions are typically answered within 24 hours.)* If the account is not regularly monitored, users should be directed to a place where questions/concerns can be directed. *(Example: This account is not regularly monitored. Questions or concerns should be sent to srwebmail@utah.gov)*

Employee Interactions on Social Media

Keeping in mind the fast pace of information dissemination through social media channels, employees are encouraged to immediately bring to the attention of the UDOT social media specialist (SMS) any issues or misinformation regarding UDOT that is published, broadcast or posted on any social media networks. The SMS will work to appropriately respond and clarify any online questions, issues or other matters in an open and transparent manner. This response may involve collaborating with parties internally to provide technical and other information. In the event the SMS is not available within one hour of notification, the UDOT Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or UDOT Director of Communications should be contacted to determine how to respond to the matter.

Only a few UDOT employees are authorized to speak for the Department online. If you are not one of them (if you are unsure, assume you are not), you should be very careful in speaking about UDOT projects, policies or issues in your personal social media interactions. If you choose to express an opinion, you must make clear that you are speaking for yourself and not the Department. You can use a disclaimer like, "These are my own thoughts and do not necessarily represent the position of UDOT." (See also Human Resource Rule R477-9-8 *Personal Blogs and Social Media Sites* and Policy 04-02 *Working with the Media*)

Please be aware that inappropriate online behavior – especially hate speech – is unacceptable for UDOT employees, even on their own personal accounts, and may result in disciplinary action.

QA/QC POLICY

Department employees and consultants using and managing social media on behalf of UDOT must employ the following quality assurance/quality control policy in all content development and management:

1. Assign a content developer, who will draft posts and social media updates.
2. Assign a content approver, who will review and approve content. Content should not be posted until approved. **Every post should be approved by either an RCM or someone in the central communications office.**

Do not sacrifice quality or protecting UDOT's reputation for the sake of immediacy. Where possible, posts should be planned out, drafted, and approved ahead of time. (See Appendix D) Even last-minute posts should follow the process listed above.

ADDING SOCIAL CHANNELS

All UDOT social media sites shall be (1) approved by the Director of Communications; (2) published using approved social networking platforms and tools; and (3) administered by an approved employee or consultant with appropriate content and technical experience.

To obtain approval to use social media on behalf of UDOT (whether a division, region, project, program, or other group/purpose), consult the Communications Office.

UDOT wants to minimize the number of social media pages. If your division or region sees a need, a plan must be provided, including:

- The purpose for using social media and the intended audience(s).
- The social media tool(s) planned for use.
- The type and amount of information that will need to be posted, as well as frequency of information posted.
- How customer interaction will be handled.
- The name and title of the person who will be responsible for content development.
- How often the platform will be monitored and by whom.
- Passwords and user names must be shared with the UDOT communications office.

A member of the communications office staff will review the plan and determine how to proceed.

Each UDOT social networking site shall include a statement specifying the purpose of the site and linkage back to an applicable Department website. All UDOT social networking moderators shall be trained regarding the Department's social media policy by Communications office staff.

As new social media channels emerge, the Communications office staff will conduct a review and determine which are appropriate for our presence.

Deleting Channels

When it is determined a social media channel is no longer needed, steps should be taken to phase out its use. This includes informing followers the account will no longer be active. As a matter of public record, the channel's content should still remain active. The account will be added to a list of "Inactive Social Media Accounts," maintained by the SMS.

SHARING CONTENT

Content Origination

Content should originate from the social media account where it most closely matches the goal of that channel. (See *Social Media at UDOT*). In situations where there could be origination from multiple channels, the administrators of those channels should collaborate and come to an agreement on where it originates. (For example: a tweet about a project in Provo should originate from Region three; a tweet about an employee receiving a prestigious award should originate from the Executive Director.)

“Sharing” Content

Posts on social media are meant to be shared. This is done with the primary objective of reaching a larger audience. Users share content by “retweeting,” “sharing,” or “liking” social media posts. Discretion should be taken before sharing content from a social media channel outside of UDOT. As a general rule, only content with a direct relation to UDOT, its projects or employees should be shared from outside sources. Content from other social media channels within UDOT is considered appropriate for sharing as long as it is still in line with the channel’s main goal.

OFFICIAL UDOT SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

UDOT encourages the use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support of the Department's mission to keep Utah moving. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become an integral part of everyday life for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

UDOT can use these tools to communicate and educate the public about the Department's mission, vision, values and projects through posts that reflect and celebrate UDOT's goals and emphasis areas.

Examples of social media include:

1. Communication: blogs, Internet forums, micro-blogging sites, social networking sites (like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), and online reader comments and forums, including websites of traditional media.
2. Collaboration: wikis and social bookmarking sites (Wikipedia and Delicious).
3. Multimedia: photo and video sharing (YouTube).
4. Review and Opinion: product reviews and question and answer sites (Quora).
5. Entertainment: virtual worlds, online gaming and game sharing.

Because social media is viewed by many as credible and influences traditional media, UDOT treats information exchange through social media and online sources in a similar manner as it does traditional media. This document is to be used in conjunction with Policy 04-02 *Working with the Media* to provide guidelines on using social media on behalf of UDOT.

While many UDOT employees use social media personally, only a few approved individuals are allowed to use it on behalf of the Department. Any division, consultant, contractor, employee or partner must gain approval from the Communication Office before engaging in an official social media capacity.

Keeping in mind the fast-paced nature of information dissemination through social media channels, employees are encouraged to immediately bring any issues or misinformation regarding UDOT that is published, broadcast or posted on any of these online and social media networks to the attention of the UDOT social media specialist (SMS). The SMS will work to appropriately respond and clarify any online questions, issues or other matters in an open and transparent manner. This response may involve collaborating with parties internally to provide technical and other information. In the event the SMS is not available within one hour of notification, the UDOT Public Information Officer (PIO) then UDOT Director of Communications should be contacted to determine how to respond to the matter.

Personal use of social media should follow Human Resource Rule R477-9-8 *Personal Blogs and Social Media Sites*. This rule outlines state policy that no employee:

- Should post information representing the state or its agencies.
- Use the state seal or agency logo.
- Share protected or confidential information.

- Should discriminate, harass or threaten fellow employees or people wishing to do business with the state.
- An agency may establish policy to supplement this section. An employee may be disciplined for

Other questions regarding personal use of social media should be directed to Human Resource Rule R47-9 *Employee Conduct***LINK TO THIS**, or to the appropriate HR representative.

Ownership of Content

Content (photos, documents, etc.) posted on a UDOT social media channel becomes the property of UDOT. As Department property, the asset is available to the public through a creative common license. UDOT asks that if UDOT content or materials are used that proper attribution is given to UDOT.

Additionally, if an employee or consultant seeks to use his or her own personal social media accounts (or consultant company accounts) to show project or program progress, this is permitted as long as credit is given to UDOT and the Department is listed as the go-to source for information about the project or program. This can be done by tagging UDOT on the appropriate social platform.

Guidelines for Use

- **Tone and content considerations:** UDOT is a state agency, and the tone should reflect that. As a rule of thumb, do not post anything that UDOT leadership wouldn't say themselves. Use proper grammar, correct spelling and double check facts before posting. It is also important to follow UDOT's style guidelines. Be friendly and conversational, but still professional.
- **Maintaining a professional space:** Social media encourages two-way communication, which benefits organizations and key stakeholders by allowing ongoing, regular interaction. However, some users abuse this and may post or use inappropriate photos, language and videos on the social media sites. To protect UDOT and to help maintain a professional space, UDOT encourages the posting of and adherence to this policy for interacting on social sites, for all parties.
- **Responding and answering:** Choosing to employ social media means taking on the responsibility to field questions and comments. Social media provides a venue for two-way communication, and it is important that UDOT does its best to respond to comments, questions and queries in a timely manner – ideally within one business day. Failure to do so, in some cases, may lead to negative feedback that could damage UDOT's reputation with the public and harm its efforts to be seen as a transparent, approachable agency. Not every comment requires a response. Facebook, in particular, should be seen as a public forum where the public can interact, ask questions, and in some cases provide answers (from a third-party source, thereby giving UDOT credibility). Answer questions from the public and respond where appropriate, but do not sacrifice quality or protecting UDOT's reputation for the sake of immediacy. Questions should be answered in a timely manner.
- **When in doubt:** If you have any questions or comments, or need assistance in addressing a situation that began in the social media space, contact the Communications Office.

UDOT Social Media Participant Code of Conduct:

We welcome and encourage comments, conversations and feedback. To maintain a professional space where ongoing communication can take place, please be advised of the following:

- Foul language, threats, obscene comments and other unacceptable comments, content and posts will be deleted at the administrator's discretion.
- Spam, off-topic or other similar posts and comments will be deleted at the administrator's discretion.
- Opinions are welcome. However, we ask that you support opinion statements with research, findings or even the original source so we can best respond.
- This account is monitored during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
- Some issues are best handled off-line. We may ask you to call us, message us privately or email us to best respond to your question or address a concern. Additionally, some great resources include:
 - Traffic and road conditions: visit udottraffic.utah.gov or download the UDOT Traffic app on your smartphone.
 - General UDOT questions or queries: call (801)965-4000 or email srwebmail@utah.gov