



SERVICE STANDARD 1.4.5

SOCIAL MEDIA

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Service Standard establishes standards and guidelines for all NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) members with regard to social media usage, and the posting of any content on any social media site that may reflect on the image or reputation of the NSW RFS.
- 1.2 This Service Standard has been developed to facilitate a consistent approach to the use of social media within the Service.
- 1.3 The NSW RFS acknowledges social media as an effective form of communicating with the community and members.
- 1.4 The NSW RFS encourages its members to responsibly utilise social media as a communication and engagement tool.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this service standard, the following definitions apply:
 - a. **Brigades and Business Units:** includes NSW RFS brigades, groups of brigades, district, team, zone, regional and head office business units.
 - b. **Identifiable as a member of the NSW RFS:** posts, images, details, content or other references which would allow a reasonable person to infer that an individual is a member of the NSW RFS. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - i. profile pictures or online photo albums depicting a member in NSW RFS uniform or personal protective clothing or equipment (PPC/PPE);
 - ii. employment or brigade membership details;
 - iii. reference to NSW RFS rank or role;

- iv. displaying the NSW RFS crest or other NSW RFS imagery; and/or
 - v. posts or other details that refer to NSW RFS business, policy or activities from a member's perspective or with information not available to non-members.
- c. **Members:** includes all NSW RFS volunteers and salaried staff, and for the purposes of this document, also includes contract, temporary and seasonal staff.
 - d. **Personal purposes:** any representation or communication in relation to the NSW RFS which has not been officially recognised by a brigade, district, team, zone, region or business unit or the Service.
 - e. **Social media:** media designed to be disseminated through conversation and social interaction, using internet based technologies and channels. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, forums and blogs.
 - f. **Social media presence:** a specific account or page on a social media channel run by a brigade, business unit or an individual. Examples include a Facebook page or a YouTube channel.
 - g. **Service-related or official capacity:** any representation or communication in relation to the NSW RFS or its business, policies or activities on behalf of a brigade, district, team, zone, region, business unit of the Service, or by a member in an official capacity (e.g. a manager establishing a closed Facebook group to communicate with members).

3 Policy

- 3.1 Members must be mindful of the information they post on public forums because it may impact on the reputation of the NSW RFS. Members must not post information on social media which could:
 - a. be misleading or deceptive;
 - b. result in bullying, victimisation or harassment;
 - c. lead to criminal penalty or civil liability;
 - d. divulge confidential or sensitive information;
 - e. reasonably be found to be vexatious, offensive, obscene, threatening, abusive, defamatory or culturally insensitive; or
 - f. be interpreted to be of a commercial or political nature.
- 3.2 Members of the NSW RFS should declare any conflicts of interest (in accordance with [Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics](#) and other relevant policies and service standards) they have in matters arising on any social media channel in which they participate.
- 3.3 All NSW RFS members are to act at all times in accordance with:
 - a. *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*; and
 - b. all NSW RFS Service Standards.
- 3.4 Members are encouraged to post content such as videos and images to social media channels. In order to preserve the good name and reputation of the NSW RFS, images and/or videos shall not be posted which:
 - a. bring the NSW RFS into disrepute;
 - b. could reasonably be found to breach the NSW RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics;
 - c. are not consistent with the NSW RFS Organisational Values;
 - d. depicts the NSW RFS in an unprofessional light;
 - e. could reasonably be found to be crude, threatening, vulgar, obscene or pornographic;
 - f. encourages improper safety, operational or work related practices;
 - g. portrays content of a confidential or sensitive nature such as serious or critical injury, fatalities or incidents that are under investigation;
 - h. could reasonably be found to cause distress to members of the community or the NSW RFS; and/or
 - i. identifies people under the age of 18 without written parental consent.

- 3.5 In accordance with [Service Standard 1.1.19 Intellectual Property](#) and relevant legislation, members must ensure that they do not infringe on copyright or intellectual property by publishing photographs, videos or other content via online channels unless consent has been received from the owner of the content.
- 3.6 Members may raise concerns about the conduct of other members on social media in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.3 Grievances. Members are reminded to follow the chain of command as set out in Service Standard 1.1.3 and its associated SOPs.
- 3.7 Any breaches of this Service Standard may be subject to action in accordance with [Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline](#).
- 3.8 For any assistance or queries regarding the interpretation of the Service Standard, members may email social.media@rfs.nsw.gov.au or contact the Organisational Communications unit.

Using Social media in a Service-related or official capacity

- 3.9 Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related manner or an official capacity, are reminded that social media is a form of broad communication and as such, members are accountable for any content they post on a social media channel that has a bearing on the NSW RFS.
- 3.10 Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related or official capacity should be aware that any social media presence can be seen as official communication from the NSW RFS.
- 3.11 Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related or official capacity must ensure that their channel and any content:
 - a. complies with NSW RFS Service Standards;
 - b. is regularly monitored;
 - c. is regularly updated;
 - d. is accurate;
 - e. is not in conflict with official stated positions of the NSW RFS;
 - f. is consistent with current organisational messages and the One NSW RFS Communication and Engagement Strategy; and
 - g. is consistent with the NSW RFS social media style guide.
- 3.12 Brigades and business units using Service-related material (non-confidential information, experiences and images of NSW RFS activities) on social media in a Service-related or official capacity must comply with Service Standard 1.4.2 NSW RFS Brand. Brigades and business units can use Service-related material on social media without applying for approval in the following circumstances:
 - a. It is part of approved NSW RFS activities (e.g. photos of members wearing personal protective clothing or on vehicles) and the NSW RFS members depicted are complying with all relevant Service Standards;
 - b. It uses a template/resource provided in the NSW RFS Social Media Toolkit; or
 - c. It uses content created complying with the NSW RFS Social Media style guide and the One NSW RFS Brand Guidelines.
- 3.13 Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related or official capacity may post relevant operational updates on their social media channels provided that it is consistent with NSW RFS State Public Liaison Unit messaging, or if the Public Liaison unit is not activated, the relevant Incident Management Team.

If members, brigades and business units choose to post operational updates they:

 - a. are encouraged to share relevant posts from State level NSW RFS social media channels; and
 - b. must be mindful that posting operational updates will create an expectation within their communities that they will provide such information and so must ensure that suitable information is then provided consistently, including during major operations. This can be achieved by:
 - i. ensuring a suitable member is allocated to provide updates; or
 - ii. posting a message referring members of the community to the NSW RFS public website or State level NSW RFS social media channels for operational information.

- 3.14 Members are encouraged to ensure that detailed or technical discussions of NSW RFS business, policy and activities take place in a private discussion board (such as a closed forum or Facebook group) that is restricted to members of the NSW RFS and kindred agencies and not be viewable by the public.
- 3.15 Members, brigades and business units are reminded that social media content is in many cases considered a record under the *State Records Act 1998*. Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related or official capacity must ensure that all relevant records are kept in accordance with that Act.
- 3.16 Members, brigades and business units using social media in a Service-related or official capacity are to appoint an administrator of the account, who will be the point of contact in the event of any content issues.
- 3.17 Administrators of Service-related or official accounts shall register their channel/s by filling out the Social Media Registration Form available in the NSW RFS Social Media Toolkit.
- 3.18 Organisational Communications will manage a register of links to Service-related or official accounts which will be published on the NSW RFS public website and used to promote the efforts of members engaging in the appropriate use of social media.
- 3.19 In the event that content posted on a social media channel breaches this or any other Service Standard, NSW RFS Organisational Communications, after consultation with the relevant manager or director, may instruct the manager or administrator of the account to remove content or the account, and may remove the account from the published register.
- 3.20 Head office business units will consult with Organisational Communications prior to creating or expanding a social media presence. Districts and brigade seeking assistance or advice on establishing or managing a channel may email social.media@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Using Social media use for personal purposes

- 3.21 The NSW RFS recognises that members may wish to share suitable Service-related material (e.g. non-confidential information, experiences and images of NSW RFS activities) through personal social media activity and shall not be discouraged from doing so.
- 3.22 Members who use social media channels to discuss NSW RFS activities should only do so in a manner that does not reflect poorly on the Service, and is consistent with the NSW RFS Organisational Values and NSW RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics.
- 3.23 Any member who is clearly identifiable as a member of the NSW RFS through their personal social media presence (such as profile images or previously posted content) is encouraged to provide a disclaimer stating that material posted is not the view of the NSW RFS.
- 3.24 Members using social media in a personal capacity are reminded that despite a disclaimer, there is the potential for content to be seen as being on behalf of the NSW RFS and members should exercise discretion with content posted. Members are reminded of their responsibilities under [Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics](#) and any Government directives.
- 3.25 Members wishing to use Service-related material for personal purposes on social media must comply with [Service Standard 1.4.2 NSW RFS Brand](#). Members can use Service-related material on social media without applying for approval in the following circumstances:
 - a. It is part of approved NSW RFS activities (e.g. photos of members wearing personal protective clothing or on vehicles) and the NSW RFS members depicted are complying with all relevant Service Standards; and
 - b. It does not imply endorsement by the Service (e.g. the use of a NSW RFS crest).
- 3.26 Any member using social media in a personal capacity who is identifiable as a member of the NSW RFS is required to:
 - a. conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the NSW RFS Code of Conduct and Ethics and the NSW RFS Organisational Values; and
 - b. comply with relevant sections of this Service Standard or any other Service Standard and relevant legislation.

4 Related documents

- [Service Standard 1.4.8 Media](#)
- [Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics](#)
- [Service Standard 1.1.14 Personal Information and Privacy](#)
- [Service Standard 1.1.2 Discipline](#)
- [Service Standard 1.1.19 Intellectual Property](#)
- [Service Standard 1.4.2 NSW RFS Brand](#)
- [Policy P5.1.6 Records Management](#)
- [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009 \(GIPA Act\)](#)
- [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#)
- [Rural Fires Act \(NSW\) 1997](#)
- [State Records Act 1998](#)
- [Coroners Act \(NSW\) 2009](#)
- [State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989](#)
- NSW Government Social Media Model Guidelines (2011)
- [NSW RFS Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [NSW RFS Social Media Registration Form](#)
- [One NSW RFS Communication and Engagement Strategy](#)
- [NSW RFS Social Media Style Guide](#)
- [One NSW RFS Brand Guidelines](#)

5 Amendments

Amendment date	Version no	Description
22 March 2012	1.0	Initial release
23 November 2015	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Clarification regarding the rights and obligations of brigades and members in relation to social media➤ Guidance for brigades and business units on the posting of operational information➤ Clarification of using Service-related information, imagery, stories