



## **AWWA Guidelines for Social Media**

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) recognizes the increasing role of online communication tools such as blogs, social networking websites, chat rooms, etc. as channels for interaction among members, volunteers, staff, the media and other stakeholders. AWWA supports open, transparent, ethical, accurate communications.

AWWA's credibility is always at stake in these activities, so everyone who represents the association online must act as a responsible steward of its position as the authoritative resource for safe water. In particular, online communication by staff on behalf of AWWA is governed by the [Employee Handbook](#) as well as applicable laws and regulations. AWWA also requires that its members, volunteers, and sections adopt these guidelines when they represent the association online.

1. **Identify Yourself.** Disclose employment, volunteer status, or other association with AWWA in all communications on behalf of the organization. Include this information in signatures that accompany messages where possible, but always be sure to tag your communications as AWWA staff or other status. Don't think you can maintain anonymity online; sites can and routinely do track the sources of user input, so you are always leaving a trail that can lead back to you and the association.
2. **Provide Accurate Information.** AWWA staff and other representatives may not knowingly communicate untrue or deceptive information. Communications should be based on current, accurate, complete, and relevant data. Where possible, post links back to content on AWWA.org or another website to corroborate assertions you make. AWWA has limited control over the validity of information communicated via online channels, so it is the employee's or other representative's responsibility to assure accuracy in the first instance. Anecdotes and individual opinions should be identified as such, so they will not be mistaken for facts asserted by AWWA.
3. **Maintain Ethical Conduct.** AWWA employees and other representatives will not conduct activities online that are illegal or contrary to policies outlined in the Employee Handbook, Privacy Policy, or related policies.
4. **Always Secure Member and Customer Data.** When members join and customers purchase from us, they place their trust not only in AWWA's products and services, but also in its integrity as an organization.

Staff and other representatives must always uphold AWWA's promise to keep personal data secure and confidential. Never include any information relating to AWWA's potential or existing members or customers in any online communication; to do so would breach AWWA's privacy policy and possibly the law.

5. **Protect Confidential and Proprietary Information of Organizations.** Give names only when needed and permitted by those individuals. Report aggregate and summary data when it will suffice, and never disclose specific details without permission. Always comply with laws regarding disclosure of confidential information, and let representatives of other organizations decide for themselves how much they wish to disclose.

6. **Use the Appropriate Platform.** When conducting official AWWA business and online communications, employees and volunteers must use the existing tech platform on the AWWA website rather than a third party platform. For example, this means that electronic committee communications cannot be conducted on any platform other than the AWWA website or via email.

In general, confidential information is any data, whether oral, written, or stored in any other medium that is not generally available to the public. Examples of confidential information include, but are not limited to:

- **Customer and Member Data**, including customer names and any personally identifiable information
- **Personal Employee Data**, including compensation, benefits, medical, or performance-related information
- **Company Operating Data**, including revenues, payments, strategic plans, or goals

For questions about whether something is confidential, consult with a manager or Human Resources professional.

**Enforcement and Potential Discipline.** Employees who participate in blogging or other online communications remain accountable for the information they share in these activities. Ask your manager, members of the Social Media Committee, or a Human Resources representative if you have any questions relating to this policy. AWWA employees who violate this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. In addition, civil and/or criminal penalties may apply.