

CWA SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY GUIDELINES – MEMBERS

CWA strongly supports the use of social media sites to discuss and advocate for the important issues facing members and working families today. While these sites offer many advantages, they also can cause serious legal problems if they are not properly used and can lead to complicated legal proceedings as well as potential disciplinary action against employee users. We have developed these guidelines for CWA members to consult when using social media to help avoid legal or other problems.

Employers frequently monitor social media sites and use information they find there against the employees who have posted it. This can lead to disciplinary action or discharge. You have a legal right to express your opinion about various activities that affect your workplace, including the rights protected by Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act, to engage in concerted activity with fellow workers regarding your wages and working conditions, but you must do so in a manner that does not cause harm to others or give your employer a basis to claim that you have been “disloyal.”

Once you have posted or submitted information on a social network site, it is virtually impossible to retract or control it. Never assume that your site is private or that what has been posted will not be disclosed to the company or other employees, including supervisors.

Many individual Facebook pages or personal social media sites contain information identifying you as employed by a particular organization or as a member of a CWA Local. When you are expressing your personal opinions, you should make it clear that these opinions are yours alone and are not intended to be understood as anything else. You should consider including a "disclaimer" on your personal page or site along the following lines:

PLEASE NOTE: the opinions expressed on this site/page are entirely my own. They should not be seen as reflecting the views of my employer or the opinions of my Local or as having been authorized or approved by anyone other than me.

1. Do not use language that is libelous, discriminatory, threatening or harassing. If you would not make the statement in person to someone you respect, modify it accordingly.

2. Do not use social media to invade anyone’s privacy. Do not post individual pictures of anyone unless you know they have consented to your doing so. Do not disclose addresses or other personal or private information about other people.

3. Do not use language that is racially, ethnically or sexually objectionable. Again, if you would not make such a statement in person to someone you know and respect, avoid doing so electronically.

4. Do not post materials that are trademarked or have copyright protection. When in doubt, use a link that will allow your audience to access the materials directly from the ownership source.

5. Do not flood electronic sites with repetitive postings that could cause disruption of an employer's business operations.

6. Avoid engaging in specific attacks that identify individuals or organizations by name. Do not disparage your employer's products or services. You have the right to complain collectively about your working conditions or benefits and to advocate for changes but posting statements attacking the company's business methods or products can lead to "disloyalty" claims and potential discipline.

7. Do not make statements that are not truthful. You are entitled to express your opinion about many topics, but if you are making a "factual" statement, you need to be able to prove that it is true. (For example, you can express your opinion that the company CEO makes too much money; you cannot say that the CEO has "stolen" from the company).

8. Avoid using social media on work time and during work hours unless you are doing so as part of a specific job assignment. Avoid using the computer or Internet access provided by your employer to post messages or communicate about matters that are not work-related. Employers can and often do monitor employee communications on company-owned or issued equipment.

9. Do not transmit spam, advertisements or solicitations for matters that are not work-related. If you are transmitting e-mails to solicit for a service or product, you must say so and you must provide a means for the recipients to opt out of receiving future e-mails on that subject. If you are sending an e-mail "blast" (e.g., to hundreds or more individuals), you should obtain legal clearance before doing so.

10. Never transmit information using someone else's name or identity. Under no circumstances should you access a computer system without authorization by signing on to that system using someone else's password.

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