



SOCIAL MEDIA

**GUIDELINES FOR CANADIAN
RED CROSS STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**



**CANADIAN
RED CROSS**

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Communities have the power to make the world a better place. We know this because we see it happen every day through the work of staff and volunteers across Canada.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) and the Canadian Red Cross embrace the fact that today's communities do not only exist in the physical world, but also online. We recognize that social media tools do not necessarily have defined geographical boundaries, and what happens in one region, zone, country or office could be noticed by others from across the country or around the world and may have an impact—both positive and negative.

Although official communication on behalf of the organization is the primary responsibility of the Public Affairs department, we recognize that staff and volunteers using social media are key to helping the Canadian Red Cross reach its communication goals.

These guidelines for social media use are designed to provide helpful, practical advice to assist Canadian Red Cross staff and volunteers to use social media responsibly. While we encourage the use of social media to communicate about topics pertaining to the Canadian Red Cross, staff and volunteers must always remember their responsibilities to the vulnerable populations we serve and to our Fundamental Principles.

These guidelines consist of two parts: best practices and recommendations by the Canadian Red Cross, followed by a summary of the rules and obligations that are already in place and how they apply to staff and volunteer use of social media.

If you have any questions about the best practice guidelines, please contact the Senior Manager, Media, or the Director of Public Affairs in your Zone.

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SECTION 1

Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are for all Canadian Red Cross employees and volunteers who use any social media tools or online communication media, either personally or professionally, including, but not limited to, the following: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube or blogs (both if you have your own blog or are posting comments on another individual's blog).

Please note this document is meant to provide guidelines for the use of social media. It does not supersede or amend any Canadian Red Cross employment commitments, policies or the obligations of Canadian Red Cross employees under the Code of Conduct or Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Defining social media

Wikipedia describes social media as “media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.”

Social media tools (or social media networking sites) include YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Flickr, where users can share content and information with one another. In communications, social media differs from traditional forms because there are more opportunities for two-way communication with the general public, which essentially means more ways for people to communicate with our organization.

Why “personal” and “private” are not the same

While communication through social media networks is primarily a personal matter, this does not mean it is private. Written conversations inside these networks can often be found through search engines such as Google. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, the permanence and transferability of anything published or posted online means that there is a possibility that what you have said may be made visible to a wider audience or taken out of context. As a result, all conversations within social media networks should be considered public rather than private.

The Canadian Red Cross Social Media Team

The national Social Media Team, working with zone or provincial social media leads, establishes an annual social media strategy to support core areas of focus for the overall goals of the Canadian Red Cross. Members act as liaison with zones and/or provinces and are available to provide direction, guidance or expertise in answering questions about social media, its use and available tools, best practices and these guidelines.

The Social Media Team includes staff from National Office, Public Affairs, as well as zone and provincial leads. Members may change over time. To identify the current social media lead member for your zone, contact your Director of Public Affairs.

Ask our advice

If your local office, programme or department wants to use social media to promote Canadian Red Cross activities, please consult first with your manager who is responsible for ensuring consultation with the Social Media Team. As stated above, this team is responsible for the annual social media strategy and for helping to ensure consistent messaging and the use of best practices and latest technology.

Using social media tools is time consuming because it requires regular updating. The Social Media Team will help you assess whether using social media tools is the best approach. We will also share best practices, and provide coordination to ensure our strategies are effective.

The roles of spokespersons in social media

National Office, Public Affairs, designates official spokespeople for the Canadian Red Cross. This includes official social media communications on behalf of the Canadian Red Cross.

It is important that staff and volunteers using social media do not misrepresent themselves as official spokespersons for the Canadian Red Cross. For example, using the Red Cross emblem or logo in pictures or your avatar would identify you as an official spokesperson and, as such, is not permissible.

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SECTION 2

BEST PRACTICES

The reality of social media is that the lines between professional and personal are easily blurred whenever you talk about your work with the Canadian Red Cross in your private social media channels. Regardless of whether your comments are negative or positive—or whether they are intended as private or public—they could be construed as the opinion of the Canadian Red Cross. Therefore, when speaking about your work and the Red Cross, we ask that you understand and follow these guidelines:

The lines between professional and personal communications are easily blurred with social media

1) Be a good ambassador

While it is everyone's personal decision whether to use social media networks and tools, you should always be aware that your behaviour and opinions reflect on the organization. If you have identified yourself as being associated with the Canadian Red Cross, your posts online may be interpreted as being the official voice of the Canadian Red Cross.

This means one must be careful to uphold the Fundamental Principle of Neutrality of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Please see Section 3 of these guidelines under "Observe neutrality").

2) Use a disclaimer

If you are using social media to talk about Canadian Red Cross work, add a disclaimer to each page, making it clear that the views you express are yours alone. Be aware that this disclaimer does not change your obligations under the Canadian Red Cross Code of Conduct or the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross.

Example:

"The postings on this site are my own and do not represent the positions, strategies or opinions of my employer."

If you have an "about me" page on your blog, do not use photos where you stand in front of Red Cross logos or emblems since this might give the website or blog an official appearance. This includes photos for your Facebook page, Twitter avatar or other personal pages. Similarly, do not use Red Cross, CRC or other direct references to the organization in your avatar or online name.

This direction will differ only in cases where individuals are using social media tools in an official capacity, as approved by Public Affairs.

3) Think of the news, your mother and your boss

Do not say anything online that you would not be comfortable seeing quoted on the news, being asked about by your mother or having to justify to your boss. Written conversations inside social media networks can often be found through search engines such as Google. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that

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one of them will forward what you say and make it visible to a wider audience. As a result, personal conversation within social media networks regarding Red Cross should always be considered public rather than private. Please see above: “Why “personal” and “private” are not the same”.

4) Be positive and add value

Both the Canadian Red Cross and the International Federation believe that the sharing of information and experiences benefits the entire humanitarian community and, ultimately, the beneficiaries we serve. Feel free to share and discuss your experiences (subject to the limitations set out in Section 3 under “Respect privacy”). Share the passion you feel for your personal work with the Society and talk about the successes you have been a part of. If Canadian Red Cross staff members and volunteers are perceived to be knowledgeable and helpful, this will reflect positively on you and the organization.

Do not comment on the quality of work done by you or a colleague either within the Canadian Red Cross or other organizations. Posting messages of support and encouragement are appropriate, but carrying on conversations about clients, beneficiaries or how work situations are managed is inappropriate.

5) Responding to concerns

The Canadian Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are complicated organizations and we work in complicated legal and operational contexts. People frequently misunderstand or choose to misunderstand us. If you come across a misrepresentation of the Movement, please contact your Director of Public Affairs to determine the best way to resolve the concern. In making approved corrections, be respectful and only provide facts.

6) Correct your own mistakes when you are aware of them.

If you have made a mistake, be upfront about it and contact your Director of Public Affairs to discuss and resolve it. If you correct an earlier post in a blog, do so visibly (e.g. by using the strikethrough function and adding a paragraph that explains the update at the end).

7) Use your best judgment and consult the Public Affairs team for advice

It is best practice to not publish anything that you are unsure of. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of an online posting or publication relating to the Canadian Red Cross please ask your representative of the Social Media Team or the Public Affairs team for their advice.

8) Protect your own privacy

A lot of websites allow you some form of control over who can see your material. Use these features.

Please be advised that controlling your privacy settings on online social media websites does not necessarily mean that your communications will be private. (Please see Section 1: “Why ‘personal’ and ‘private’ are not the same.”)

9) Keep security in mind

This section is particularly for delegates or staff writing about delegates or international missions. Be particularly cautious in online discussions if you are in an operational context. If you are a delegate, please ensure that you have read and follow your delegation’s security requirements.

Never talk about routes or times of planned convoys or distribution of goods. If in doubt, talk to the security unit or a security delegate. Never post personal details such as your home address or that of your colleagues. Bear in mind that personal details of local staff members can be very security-sensitive in many operational areas—this includes their

Example:

“Update, 5 July 2009: My team delivered 500 tons of widgets to Alphaville - not 5,000 tons as I wrote previously.”

Example:

On Facebook you can control your privacy settings under “Settings -> Privacy Settings -> Who Can See My Stuff”. We recommend that you review these settings on a regular basis and set them to ‘Friends’.

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SECTION 3

EXISTING RULES AND OBLIGATIONS

In addition to the Code of Conduct for Canadian Red Cross staff, the following policies and disciplinary actions also apply when one uses social media: the Fundamental Principles, the Volunteer Agreement, the rules laid out in the Handbook for Delegates, the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, and policies governing our delivery of personal support and homemaking services, including the Therapeutic Boundaries Policy, Computer Use Policy, Child Protection Policy and Privacy Policies.

names and pictures.

10) Spread the word and connect with your colleagues

You are encouraged to share the successes of the overall organization. To connect with members of the Social Media Team and official Red Cross accounts, please review the glossary at the end of this document.

1) Observe neutrality

Example:

Following the elections in Alphaland, the opposition claims that the results were rigged and starts a campaign on Facebook and Twitter. They ask users to modify their profile photo and to post messages in support of re-elections. As a Canadian Red Cross staff member, you cannot take part in these or other related activities since this would be a violation of the Fundamental Principle of Neutrality.

While all the Fundamental Principles are important, The Fundamental Principle of Neutrality is especially relevant to social media. The IFRC advises:

“not publicly express any opinions on events connected with political affairs or engage in political activities that could reflect adversely on the impartiality, neutrality or independence of the Federation, e.g., public support of a political party.”

This does not mean that you cannot “follow” or be “friends” with political leaders or organizations as a means to stay abreast of what is happening in the community.

2) Do not use the emblem or the Canadian Red Cross logo

You cannot use the emblem, the Canadian Red Cross Logo or the IFRC logotype as any part of your blog or

social media profile. (With the exception of official Red Cross social media channels as approved by the Social Media Team or your director of Public Affairs.)

3) Stay focused on your job

While the Canadian Red Cross leadership encourages the use of social media and online communities for business purposes and recognizes that these can be a valuable resource, keep in mind that you were not hired to spend time on

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social media channels for private matters. Ensure that your online activities do not interfere with your job.

4) Keep your manager in the loop

To avoid problems and to ensure that our social media efforts are most effective for the entire organization, discuss your work-related social media activities with your manager as well as your Social Media zone lead.

5) Respect privacy

Respect the confidentiality of personal and privileged information. As per the Canadian Red Cross Code of Conduct:

“The relationship between employee/volunteers and Canadian Red Cross clients requires employee/volunteers to understand their unique position of authority and perceived power. Employees and volunteers have a duty of care to clients and responsibility to ensure that clients are treated with dignity and respect.”

“Respect the client’s privacy with respect to his or her personal information, image and property.”

In short, do not reveal confidential details of Canadian Red Cross clients, employees or volunteers.

In addition please respect people’s right to privacy and do not take photos or videos without their permission, and ensure consent is provided. Keep in mind that many people who have just been through a traumatic event are under shock and might say “yes” to something they might later regret. Do not post anything about any minors.

6) When communicating with children and youth using social media or other electronic communication, always remember the following rules:

- All communication with minors through Red Cross networking sites should be in a manner that is open, transparent and follows these guidelines and those outlined in the handbook.
- The primary purpose of communication with minors must be for providing information related to a Red Cross program, activity or event and not for socializing or other personal interaction.
- When using a Canadian Red Cross social media account, employees and volunteers must not initiate “friend” requests with minors but may accept “friend” requests from minors who are involved with the Canadian Red Cross.
- Online “chatting” with minors is not permitted.
- Pictures or videos of children and youth on the Canadian Red Cross social media sites should be limited to documentation or promotion of group activities and must not be used for the identification of individual group members. “Tagging” or other identification of minors shown in photos or videos is not permitted. Please refer to the Guidelines of the Child Protection Policy on reporting on children for more specific information and guidance.

7) If you notice criminal activity on an individual or group page, especially related to children (anyone under the age of 18 years), you have the responsibility and legal obligation to report it to the authorities

If a Red Cross employee or volunteer notices online intimidation or bullying on the page of a minor or in a group managed by the Canadian Red Cross, the Code of Conduct states:

“Volunteers and employees must report immediately any knowledge or observations of a child/youth being bullied, harassed or abused to his/her immediate supervisor and/or according to provincial/territorial Child Protection Acts.”

The “Reporting Form for Concerns Related to the Code of Conduct” must be filled out and submitted according to the procedures set out in the Code of Conduct.

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Process and Protocol to Follow During a Disaster

- Follow the lead of the official national (during international responses) and provincial (during domestic responses) social media accounts; please share any of these official updates with your networks.
- Look out for updated messaging from the Social Team (www.redcross.ca/twitterteam) – these are the key messages that can be shared publicly.
- Go ahead and post information from key messages that have been approved by Public Affairs or Disaster Management.
- Remember that questions directed to any national or provincial account will be responded to by those who manage those accounts; you do not need to respond to those, unless your support is specifically requested.
- Remember that if you identify yourself as a Red Crosser, you could be considered an official spokesperson.
- Ensure that you are a trusted source of information. That means take your time before re-sharing posts; open links to ensure they work and are accurate; do not spread misinformation or rumours.
- If you see reputational threats, contact the Public Affairs lead, either Janice Babineau or Karen Snider.
- Make sure your facts are straight – double check phone numbers or addresses.
- Date/time stamp information, if relevant (10PM 13/01/01).
- Ensure your posts adhere to the Code of Conduct and social media guidelines.
- If you receive a request from media through social networks, please alert Public Affairs.

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SECTION 4

GLOSSARY

See below for a list of some of the key Canadian Red Cross and Movement social media sites.

On Facebook

Canadian Red Cross: <http://www.facebook.com/canadianredcross>

Croix-Rouge canadienne: <http://www.facebook.com/croixrougequebec>

Red Cross/ Red Crescent: <http://www.facebook.com/RedCrossRedCrescent>

On Twitter

Canadian Red Cross official accounts: @redcrosscanada @redcrosstalk @croixrouge_qc @redcrossbc @redcrossab @redcrosssk @redcrossmb @canredcrossatl @redcrosspei

Canadian Red Cross Social Media Team, National Office representatives and zone leads:

@karensnider @janicebabineau @katiekallio @jamieleighto @pamaungthin @ holmes_gna @gweneamer @katiwrobinson @matthewjocon

Canadian Red Cross Blogs

<http://redcrosstalk.wordpress.com>

<http://blogue.croixrouge.ca>

Other Red Cross blogs:

<http://redcrosspdx.blogspot.com/>

<http://blog.redcross.org/>

blogs.redcross.org.uk/

YouTube

Canadian Red Cross: <http://www.youtube.com/canadianredcross>

IFRC: <http://www.youtube.com/ifrc>

Flickr

Canadian Red Cross: http://www.flickr.com/photos/canadian_redcross/

IFRC: <http://www.flickr.com/ifrc/>

LinkedIn

<http://www.linkedin.com/company/canadian-red-cross>

Canadian Red Cross Social Media Ambassadors

<http://www.redcross.ca/twitterteam>