

**Guidelines for use of messaging platform & Social Media by the officers of Government of Gujarat, India**

Government of Gujarat,  
Science & Technology Department  
Circular No. SCM/10/2018/614021/IT  
Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar.  
Dated: 29/11/2018

**Read:**

1. GAD GR no. CEL/102009/686/GH dated 9/2/2011

**CIRCULAR**

The digital revolution has heralded a new era of communication. The traditional modes of communication such as posts/Dak/telegrams/Telephone/Fax etc., have given way to emails, SMS, Video Conference and smart clients that provide for unified communication across different communication channels. Recent advancements in peer to peer and group messaging through platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype etc., have not only increased efficiency of communication but have also added to effectiveness of field functionaries in finding a balance between the need for field visits and the need for access to all Government functionaries for effective management of responsibilities. In recent past for managing flood and other alerts as well as in coordination of events the departments have used emails/messaging platforms/sms/video conference very effectively.

The official communication - mode - is specified by the respective Manual of Office Procedure. As a part of digital revolution, as new means of communication platforms evolve, it is necessary to dynamically evaluate available platforms for their effectiveness consistent with the need for sufficient security and the need for maintaining official record in relation to the Government communication. As the available platforms themselves emerge, mature and sometimes fade away in view of the intense competition, it is necessary to prescribe appropriate guidelines for the Government officials to ensure that they take the best

advantage of available technologies without compromising on the need for record keeping and security.

Besides communication channels, social media offers itself as a very effective platform for communication with the masses for developmental outcomes as well as for feedback on the Government Programs and Policies. While few departments and offices have started using the social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, the potential offered by social media is still not optimally utilized.

The Government has, vide GAD GR CEL/102009/686/GH dated 9/2/2011 provided for a lump sum amount of Rs 20000 for purchase of smart phone by senior officers. The objective is to provide for an official phone which can be used by the officer to stay connected with his colleagues and other senior functionaries of the Government. While reach, speed and multiplier effect are positives from the messaging platforms and social media, the same also pose equivalent risk in case of lack of attention to what goes on social media. Hence in the context of eGovernance and to strengthen the 'Information for all' pillar of the 9 pillars of the Digital India Mission, it is imperative that the departments and offices of the Government take advantages offered by social media while staying alert to the pitfalls of posting content not thoroughly thought through.

Accordingly, after careful consideration, the Government issues following guidelines in relation to the use of digital communication platforms:

1. The Government officials will use government provided email ([\\*@gujarat.gov.in](mailto:*@gujarat.gov.in)) or the NIC email for their official communication and will not use email accounts provided by any other entity for official communication.
2. For Government provided email accounts, officials will use archival facility to safely store their email messages for official records. ARTD in GAD will come out with guidelines for timeframe for storage of email messages separately.
3. For disaster co-ordination and for other co-ordination related work such as meeting instruction or communicating for seeking information or for event co-ordination messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Skype or Telegram

may be utilised. For that purpose respective departments and HoDs will decide the relevant platform and will circulate instruction to their subordinate offices. In relation to officers for whom the GAD GR at reference CEL/102009/686/GH dated 9/2/2011 makes provision for purchase of a smart phone, it would be mandatory to keep such a smart phone and be a part of the communication group on such messaging platform for official communication. However, while using such platforms, care will be taken to ensure that confidential information or policy proposals are not shared or discussed on such messaging platforms.

4. The Government has created an organisational set up for managing responsibilities of each office. Said organisational set up also includes Registry branch or officials and staff to receive communication and for scrutiny and onward transmission to respective officers. While using messaging platform for efficiencies, the departments and HoDs must ensure that the messaging platform is used for communicating only such important instructions which are relevant to be posed directly to the official addressed to in view of his/her assigned responsibilities. Seeking communications of routine nature or periodic statements or progress reports, unless it becomes imperative to put it to the notice of the senior official directly, may be avoided on messaging platform.
5. Secretaries, HoDs and Heads of Offices are encouraged to use social media platform to increase reach of their respective offices for connect and feedback with civic society. While posting content or sharing or circulating content on social media platforms, such officials will take care to ensure that the content being shared does not conflict with rule 9 and 10 of the Gujarat Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1971 or rule 6 and 7 of the AIS (conduct) Rules as applicable.
6. In relation to social media usage, officials are encouraged to use their official accounts as separate from their personal accounts. The officers may take sufficient care for safe keep of the passwords for official accounts and for scrutiny of content that may get posted on the social media.
7. For social media accounts, the concerned officers may also set up a feedback and response mechanism in their office. Any factual inconsistency may be responded to with accurate facts. Policy criticism may be taken in as constructive criticism for improvement of program or scheme. Deficiencies in

delivery mechanism reported may be corrected and a response to the critique be posted on the message trail where such deficiency has been highlighted.

8. For social media usage, in relation to sharing or forwarding of content, officials may exercise caution for the factual accuracy of the content as well as for the nature of content. While officers in their discretion may decide on the content to be originally created and shared as well as shared or forwarded out of the content created by others, provisions of the Information Technology Act and other relevant penal laws may be kept in mind to not share or forward any content that may be defamatory, may create enmity or hatred among groups of people or may violate privacy or rights of other individuals. As a good thumb rule, reference to specific names may be avoided and aggregate information may be shared.
9. If any officer maintains his personal social media account then while posting on policy issues, while adhering to the requirement under the applicable conduct rules, the concerned officer may add disclaimer that the views are his/her own and not of the Government.
10. The main communication platforms for the Government communication will continue to be email and telephones. To ensure that use of social media or messaging platform by officials does not impact program delivery due to time commitment required, only occasional and need based use of messaging platforms or social media is permitted during office hours.

This issues with the approval of competent authority in concurrence with the Information and Broadcasting Department and ARTD and Personnel Division in GAD.

By order and in the name of the Governor of Gujarat,



(Dhananjay Dwivedi)  
**Secretary to the Government of Gujarat,  
Department of Science & Technology**

To

1. **\*Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Governorshri, Raj Bhavan, Gandhinagar.**
2. **Chief Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister.**
3. **Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister.**
4. **Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister.**
5. **Personal Secretary to Hon'ble Ministers, Government of Gujarat.**
6. **\*Personal Secretary to the Leader of Opposition Party in Gujarat**

- Legislative Assembly, Gandhinagar.
7. \*Deputy Secretary to Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat.
  8. \*Registrar, Hon'ble Gujarat High Court, Ahmedabad.
  9. \*Secretary, Gujarat Vigilance Commission, Gandhinagar.
  10. \*Secretary, Gujarat Public Service Commission, Ahmedabad.
  11. \*Secretary, Gujarat Legislature Secretariat, Gandhinagar.
  12. \*Secretary, Gujarat Civil Service Tribunal, Gandhinagar.
  13. All Administrative Departments
  14. VC and MD, GIDC, Udyog Bhavan
  15. Industries Commissioner, Government of Gujarat
  16. All Heads of the Department of Science and Technology Department
  17. All Collectors.
  18. Managing Director, Gujarat Informatics Limited, Gandhinagar
  19. Director, Information Technology, Gandhinagar
  20. DDG and SIO, NIC, Gujarat
  21. Account General (A&E) Gujarat, Post Box No. 2201, Rajkot.
  22. Account General (A&E) Gujarat, Ahmedabad Branch, Ahmedabad.
  23. Account General (Audit-1) Gujarat, MS Building, Ahmedabad.
  24. Director, Account & Treasuries, Gujarat State, Gandhinagar
  25. Pay & Account Offices, Ahmedabad/Gandhinagar
  26. All District Treasury Offices
  27. Resident Audit Officer, Ahmedabad/Gandhinagar.
  28. Select File.

\*By Letter

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