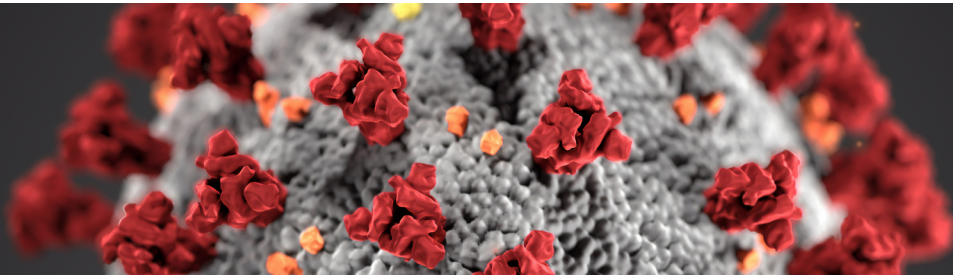


# SOCIAL MEDIA & THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

How Social Media Archiving and Risk Management Tools  
Help Jurisdictions Cope with an Unprecedented Reality



To disseminate accurate and up to date information as quickly as possible, public agencies across the country are relying on social media to reach citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media as a primary communication channel, along with archiving and alerting solutions, are saving agencies time and resources and ensuring compliance with public records law. To aid agencies' efforts in sharing accurate and trusted information in a timely manner, the CDC has created a **"Social Media Toolkit"** specifically designed to localize efforts in responding to the virus that causes COVID-19.

## WHY SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Citizens need an up-to-date, trusted local source to rely on for information. Increasingly, these sources are social media channels from their local public agencies. They are likely trying to work from home, navigating a new work reality plus balancing a home life that has been disrupted.

Through all of this, public communicators are still on the front lines, tasked to promote accurate data with a goal to keep citizens safe. In fact, in March alone this year, ArchiveSocial saw that social media usage by public agencies **increased by over 33%** showing how much more agencies rely on their social media networks for communication. It's an unfortunate reality with this crisis that social media is also being flooded with misinformation and inaccurate information from both people who are unaware that what they are posting is inaccurate and from those deliberately trying to cause confusion. Citizens with ill objectives or inadequate knowledge can contribute to the spread of this false information and can create further panic or fear within communities.

The World Health Organization has even categorized the spreading of false information as an **"infodemic"** and a secondary issue of fighting COVID-19 where there is, "[...] an overabundance of information, some accurate and some not, that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it." Because of this, it's crucial that public agencies can be the trusted source of accurate information, and when in doubt, the facts win out.



## MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

While communicators are tirelessly working to get the facts out to their respective communities, they have the additional responsibility of maintaining compliance. In a **recent public sector study** performed by ArchiveSocial, almost 25% of agencies that had received a records request stated they'd received requests that specifically referenced social media content.

**In all 50 states, social media is considered a public record**, and agencies have an obligation to comply with open records laws. This includes not only content the agency posts, but also content their constituents create through their comments. A system that captures all content and meta-data is the only way of ensuring compliance. The two-way engagement and conversation of social media allows citizens to post their own questions and allows the agency to respond directly to the citizens, sometimes addressing pleas for help or clarification of information. There is no official communication between government and citizens that is more critical to archive than the conversations around COVID-19.


It is crucial to remember that the impact of this pandemic will extend far longer than the social distancing and "shelter in place" orders. Of all the long-term best practices to develop in the realm of social media emergency management, **activating a social media archiving solution** is perhaps the most important one. In the furor of a crisis, communications professionals don't have time to do more than cope. Still, after it passes public information, requests can flood in, demanding documentation and records of how the agency handled the situation.

Any government agency using their social media to share essential information around COVID-19 must have an archive, so they can go back and show how they communicated and exactly what was communicated. The ability to go back and locate specific conversations and comments, even ones that have been deleted or edited, can make the difference between being compliant or facing damaging legal action or eroded community trust.

## WHY ARCHIVESOCIAL?

ArchiveSocial works with **nearly 3,000** government and law enforcement agencies, school districts, and private companies to capture and archive information shared on social media. We help public and private agencies comply with record-keeping regulations and mitigate risk related to social media. By connecting directly to the social networks, we ensure complete, authentic and in-context records of social media communications.

To get started, please contact ArchiveSocial by phone or online.

 **(888) 558-6032**

 **[www.archivesocial.com/contact](https://www.archivesocial.com/contact)**

