



# tackling trolls

# 7 Tips For Government to Combat Online Trolls

Online trolls are increasingly targeting government agencies by posting on official agency social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Trolls are fueled by a variety of motives, including bad experiences with an agency or the desire for online recognition. Historically, most government agencies would ignore trolls. However, as trolls have become more prominent and visible, government agencies that fail to respond appropriately are now subjecting themselves to viral negative exposure, legal liabilities and major operational challenges.

At some point or another, virtually everyone encounters an online troll. Troll encounters are very common for public agencies communicating on social media. The good news is, there are techniques that every agency can use to take the teeth out of trolls and maintain a safe and open space for citizen engagement online.

## 1. Put a policy in place

You must establish clear guidelines and train staff to enforce them consistently. If you need help establishing a social media policy, you can download a government [Social Media Policy Template](#) to use as a starting point.

## 2. Take the high road

Courtesy and professionalism stand out in high relief against a backdrop of hostility. The best way to neutralize a negative comment or post is to use positivity and professionalism.

## 3. Don't rush to respond

Take time to consider your response instead of firing off an emotionally charged response. It also helps to have a comment moderation policy, you can download an example [here](#).



## 4. Stand on facts

Trolls thrive on misinformation and rumors. One of the most effective ways to counter a troll is by providing accurate information that rises above the noise. Opinions will not help here, only facts.

## 5. Be concise

Keep answers short and digestible. Remember you are not just replying to the troll, but also everyone else that is watching the situation unfold. The longer your responses, the more confusing it can be for onlookers.

## 6. Look for the root cause

Try to understand the source of the anger to prevent recurring attacks. Once this is pinpointed, identify ways to fill the gaps in knowledge with your audience to prevent future incidents.

## 7. Keep accurate records

Trolls can not only wreak havoc on your online presence, they can also create unforeseen liabilities. Make sure to archive all social media records so there is no question who said what if a legal situation arises. Visit [archivesocial.com](#) to take a free sample of your social media archive.

**Learn More From The City of Margate, Florida**

[Click here](#) to watch an on-demand webinar featuring the PIO of the City of Margate, Florida and learn from her real-life experience tackling trolls. Brought to you by *Government Technology*.