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Sent: Thursday, July 02, 2009 4:54 PM
To: Mager, Suzanne (DOR)

Subject: RE: Twitter, etc. and records retention

To help apply retention requirements to these records, I would suggest considering the following four factors when managing the retention of their public records using social networking sites:

1. Are the posts public records?

If the posts are made or received in connection with the transaction of the agency's public business (such as providing advice or receiving comments about the agency, its programs, core business, etc.), then they are public records for the purposes of records retention and need to be retained for their minimum retention periods.

2. Are the posts primary or secondary copies?

If the posts are simply copies of records that the agency is already retaining for the minimum retention period (such as links to publications), then the posts may be considered secondary copies and retained accordingly. Otherwise, the posts are the agency's primary record.

3. How long do the posts need to be retained?

Agencies need to retain their primary record of posts which are public records for at least the minimum retention period for those type of records listed in the approved records retention schedule. Agencies should use the same records series for posts that they would use if the same advice was distributed as a letter or an email to everyone within your agency's jurisdiction.

4. In what format are the posts to be retained?

Electronic records must be retained in electronic format (WAC 434-662-040). Ideally, the posts should be retained in the application format in which they were created or received.

If this is not possible, then the agency need to consider and document in their procedures which record they will retain in lieu of the original post (such as email confirmations of the post or comments, etc). I realize this is a significant issue with some of these social networking sites as the posts and comments are held by these sites outside of our control. But it important to remember that we still keep records of outgoing correspondence even though the original signed letter is sent outside the control of our agency by making file copies.

Agencies may also need to document in their policies and procedures for what records the use of this technology is most appropriate.