

USMS Electronic Media Communication Policy

The use of USMS online communication tools such as forums and social media sites is a privilege and a benefit that can enhance the member experience. But members of the Board of Directors need to be aware that they have special responsibilities when using these communication opportunities. Because of their position, they may be seen as representing the views of the USMS as an organization. Improper communication behavior by Board members can damage the reputation of USMS or create liability. Therefore, USMS Board members should adhere to the following when communicating by on social media, blogs, and on-line forums (collectively “Electronic Media”).

Transparency – Board members who use Electronic Media should clearly state whether they are speaking on behalf of themselves or the USMS organization. Generally, unless granted specific authorization, only the President and Executive Director should speak on behalf of USMS. When speaking on behalf of oneself on Electronic Media, Board members should state that any opinions they express are their own and not necessarily those of USMS. While some commenters on Electronic Media have the option of remaining anonymous publicly, USMS Board members should disclose who they are and should not use anonymous aliases.

Accuracy – USMS Board members should use reasonable efforts to ensure that their Electronic Communications are true and accurate. Clearly distinguish opinions from facts. Even if one is stating an opinion, a Board member should ensure that his or her statements are accurate. Ambiguity, exaggeration and hyperbole should be avoided, as they can be lead to misinterpretation.

Confidentiality – Board members should not disclose confidential information on Electronic Media. See the USMS Confidentiality Policy. Information posted electronically can spread rapidly and broadly, with little ability to retrieve the information once revealed. This makes following the Confidentiality Policy especially important for Electronic Media.

Respect – When Board members communicate on Electronic Media, they should be considerate and respectful of others. Choose words carefully and keep in mind that readers may have different sensitivities. A good guideline is to imagine whether you would be comfortable communicating what you are saying electronically face-to-face with the recipients or the person who is the subject of your communication. Since the USMS Board speaks with one voice after decisions have been reached, Board members should not use Electronic Media to criticize Board decisions or Board members.

Legal – Board members should communicate within the bounds of the law. Unless one is acting as Legal Counsel, Board members should not state legal conclusions or opinions. Board members should also abide by copyright laws when using Electronic Media and should not broadly communicate the copyrighted work of others without authority or permission.

Those Board members who wish to participate in Electronic Media should endeavor to use it as an opportunity to further the mission and values of USMS. If Electronic Media is to be used, it should be to portray a positive face of USMS.