



Agencies using social media to promote and enhance crime prevention efforts

- Sacramento, California, Police Department
- Bellevue, Nebraska, Police Department
- Fairfax County, Virginia, Police Department
- Kennesaw, Georgia, Police Department
- Roanoke, Virginia, Police Department

International Association of Chiefs of Police

1-800-THE-IACP
socialmedia@theiacp.org
www.iacpsocialmedia.org

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRIME PREVENTION FACT SHEET

Why should law enforcement use social media to promote crime prevention?

The most effective law enforcement agencies recognize and promote partnerships with their citizens to prevent crime. Citizens who are engaged and empowered to be responsible for their communities are valuable assets to the work of any police department. As the popularity of social media rises, these tools provide opportunities for law enforcement agencies to proactively reach out and connect with citizens and promote crime prevention in their communities.

How can law enforcement use social media for crime prevention?

Posting Crime Prevention Tips. Department websites and social media pages provide excellent platforms for posting crime prevention tips. These tips can emphasize and reinforce crime prevention activities taking place in a particular month. For example, bicycle safety can be highlighted in August as part of back-to-school activities. Home safety and security tips can be featured in June as part of summer vacation and travel planning. Identity theft awareness and prevention suggestions can be featured in April as citizens are preparing tax returns.

Supporting Neighborhood Watch Groups. The sustained involvement of the local law enforcement agency in watch group activities is critical. Social media can be used to link the work of a neighborhood watch group to the department's priorities and sustain the relationship. For example, neighborhood watch group meeting announcements can be posted or linked to a department's Facebook page. A law enforcement agency can feature the "Neighborhood Watch Group of the Month" and highlight the work and accomplishments of the community group. This type of recognition will foster support for crime prevention and goodwill in the community. Most importantly, social media can be used to effectively

distribute information to many neighborhood watch groups in a timely manner.

Promoting Crime Prevention Events. Departments can use all of their social media tools—Twitter, blogs, Facebook, and so on—to organize and promote crime prevention activities and events. Example activities include Celebrate Safe Communities, National Night Out, local community fairs where department officers will be present and conduct activities, and free document shredding days.

Developing a Crime Prevention Blog. A blog that focuses on crime prevention opens the opportunity for citizens to respond to and discuss information posted by a department. Because blogs can be interactive, they encourage dialogue with a department and provide important community feedback. A crime prevention blog can help connect law enforcement executives to their community and improve accessibility.

Hosting a Crime Prevention Web Chat. Hosting a crime prevention web chat with the chief or the public information officer allows the department to interface with many citizens regarding ways that they can keep themselves and their communities safe. Because web chats are interactive, they allow citizens to post questions and responses to crime prevention information.

Creating a Crime Prevention Podcast. A podcast is an audio presentation that can be posted to a website and downloaded for playing at the convenience of the listener. Though podcasts are not interactive, they are a way for a department to create a presentation that can be downloaded by anyone who is interested in learning more about crime prevention. Podcasts can be posted online along with crime prevention documents and other useful department information.