

Guidelines for use of messaging platform & Social Media by the officers of Government of Gujarat, India

Government of Gujarat,
Science & Technology Department
Circular No. SCM/10/2018/614021/IT
Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar.
Dated: 29/11/2018

Read:

1. GAD GR no. CEL/102009/686/GH dated 9/2/2011

CIRCULAR

The digital revolution has heralded a new era of communication. The traditional modes of communication such as posts/Dak/telegrams/Telephone/Fax etc., have given way to emails, SMS, Video Conference and smart clients that provide for unified communication across different communication channels. Recent advancements in peer to peer and group messaging through platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype etc., have not only increased efficiency of communication but have also added to effectiveness of field functionaries in finding a balance between the need for field visits and the need for access to all Government functionaries for effective management of responsibilities. In recent past for managing flood and other alerts as well as in coordination of events the departments have used emails/messaging platforms/sms/video conference very effectively.

The official communication - mode - is specified by the respective Manual of Office Procedure. As a part of digital revolution, as new means of communication platforms evolve, it is necessary to dynamically evaluate available platforms for their effectiveness consistent with the need for sufficient security and the need for maintaining official record in relation to the Government communication. As the available platforms themselves emerge, mature and sometimes fade away in view of the intense competition, it is necessary to prescribe appropriate guidelines for the Government officials to ensure that they take the best

advantage of available technologies without compromising on the need for record keeping and security.

Besides communication channels, social media offers itself as a very effective platform for communication with the masses for developmental outcomes as well as for feedback on the Government Programs and Policies. While few departments and offices have started using the social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, the potential offered by social media is still not optimally utilized.

The Government has, vide GAD GR CEL/102009/686/GH dated 9/2/2011 provided for a lump sum amount of Rs 20000 for purchase of smart phone by senior officers. The objective is to provide for an official phone which can be used by the officer to stay connected with his colleagues and other senior functionaries of the Government. While reach, speed and multiplier effect are positives from the messaging platforms and social media, the same also pose equivalent risk in case of lack of attention to what goes on social media. Hence in the context of eGovernance and to strengthen the 'Information for all' pillar of the 9 pillars of the Digital India Mission, it is imperative that the departments and offices of the Government take advantages offered by social media while staying alert to the pitfalls of posting content not thoroughly thought through.

Accordingly, after careful consideration, the Government issues following guidelines in relation to the use of digital communication platforms:

1. The Government officials will use government provided email (*@gujarat.gov.in) or the NIC email for their official communication and will not use email accounts provided by any other entity for official communication.
2. For Government provided email accounts, officials will use archival facility to safely store their email messages for official records. ARTD in GAD will come out with guidelines for timeframe for storage of email messages separately.
3. For disaster co-ordination and for other co-ordination related work such as meeting instruction or communicating for seeking information or for event co-ordination messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Skype or Telegram