



TWITTER FACT SHEET

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a microblogging tool that allows users to send short messages (140 characters or less) that will immediately be distributed to their network of followers. People can receive tweets without having a Twitter account.

How can law enforcement use Twitter?

Twitter allows law enforcement agencies to send out immediate updates to large groups of people anytime and anywhere. Twitter can be used to distribute traffic alerts, disaster preparedness and response information, news, prevention tips, and event details. Users can also use this service to link to their existing Web site, press releases, or other information.

How do you get started?

Consult the legal and communications office for your agency or municipality to determine the most effective approach. It may also be helpful to browse the Twitter page of other law enforcement agencies to see how they are currently using the service. Decide what your Twitter strategy will be. Some questions to consider:

- Who will be in charge of maintaining the site?
- What type of information are you planning to share?
- How often will you post?

Once you have developed your Twitter strategy, go to www.twitter.com and click "Sign up now." Create an account using a meaningful account name so the community will recognize the agency. Remember to link to your department's Web site so the community will know where to find you. You have the option to personalize the page on Twitter. If you do so, remember to make it look professional; again for ideas, consult other agency pages. Then, you are ready to start "tweeting," as

posting Twitter messages is known.

Twitter has an extensive help section accessible from both the Twitter home page and each user's account page.

Twitter impersonators

Some Twitter users discover that others are impersonating them. Impersonation violates the Twitter terms of service and may result in suspension of the offending account. Twitter has set up a system where users can report abuse, even if they do not have a Twitter account.

Using Twitter with other types of social media

Because various social media services have different audiences, it may be a good idea to have accounts on multiple sites. Some sites make it possible for users to post messages to multiple sites at once. For example, users can have their Twitter feed posted on their Facebook page.

Twitter terms

Tweet: a post or status update on Twitter.

Retweet or RT: sending out a tweet to your followers that was generated by another user.

Feed: a list of a user's recent tweets; the feed can be posted on other sites such as Facebook or an agency's Web site.

Follower: a person who subscribes to receive tweets from a registered user.

Direct Message or DM: a private tweet sent to a specific user, or users

Hashtag or #: precedes a term to allow that subject to appear in Twitter search results.

Agencies using Twitter

- Toronto, Ontario, Police Service
- Collier County, Florida, Sheriff's Department
- Butler University, Indiana, Police Department
- Colorado State Patrol

International Association of Chiefs of Police

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