

**National Weather Service (NWS) Service Description Document (SDD)**  
**April 2011**  
**NWS Experimental Facebook Pages**

**Part 1 - Mission Connection**

**a. Service Description:**

Facebook, the largest of the social media sites, is a social networking web site where users can connect and interact with other people, organizations, and businesses. It has an established user base in the United States of ~150 million active accounts or about one account for every two residents, and is now the most visited site on the Web. The NWS has already produced an effective Facebook national presence and has been prototyping local Facebook pages at nine NWS sites. To take advantage of the valuable connections with the local user base, NWS is exploring expansion of this presence at the field office level. A local NWS Facebook “storefront” would complement the national site and offer powerful tools to help disseminate life saving information; increase the public’s understanding of weather, water, and climate; increase the public’s ability to take action; and draw users to official NWS web sites.

NWS will be using Facebook as a supplemental channel to experimentally disseminate environmental information and promote weather awareness activities including outreach and educational efforts. Environmental data will scale to the area served by the office (i.e., sub-area warnings etc will not be posted) and may be included in either national or local Facebook pages.

Most content posted to Facebook will exist in a substantially similar form on NWS official Web pages. No environmental information will be provided in posts that are not already contained in other official NWS products or on NWS web pages. Wall posts will cover:

- ◆ A subset of NWS environmental information, including:
  - Area-wide hazards
  - Multimedia Weather Briefings (for participating offices)
  - Graphiccasts (for participating offices)
  - Paraphrases of issued Watches, Warnings, and Alerts, linking to more complete information on NWS Website
- ◆ Safety awareness messages (Awareness Weeks, storm spotter education events, and a wide variety of outreach programs)
- ◆ “Top News of the Day” from local NWS Web pages
- ◆ Weather “tidbits” (short educational posts from NWS pages as well as environmental information facts, climate-related factoids, etc.)
- ◆ Past weather/water/climate event summaries and record events

**Note:** This service is being provided on an experimental basis to assess the utility to the public and the ability of NWS to support local office pages. Upon review of performance results during the experimental period, this experimental service may be discontinued. It is NWS’s goal to implement local Facebook pages for each local NWS office/national center.

## **b. Purpose/Intended Use:**

The goal of implementing experimental local Facebook pages is to provide a supplemental channel to disseminate environmental information and promote weather awareness activities including outreach and educational efforts. This supplemental channel will increase the reach and visibility of the NWS message and expand dissemination of NWS environmental information. Facebook posts will incorporate, refer to, or direct users to more complete information available on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or NWS web pages. In some cases, primarily for purposes of outreach/education, Facebook posts may direct users to websites containing information about activities in which the NWS is participating.

Facebook posts do not always reflect the most current information. Users should not rely on this service as the primary means of receiving alerts/warnings of hazardous weather. Current NWS information and alerts/warnings are available on NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) and our official website: <http://www.weather.gov/>. As a supplemental service, the amount and content of information provided may change and the frequency of updates posted to the pages may vary and is not guaranteed.

Responses to posts from outside the NWS are made on a time-available basis and may be extremely limited during periods of severe weather.

## **NWS Posting Policy for Facebook:**

The NWS is using Facebook as a supplemental channel for improving weather awareness. Postings to this page highlight activities of interest and importance to both the weather community and the public, and include NWS meetings, constituent and partner engagement activities, and public education efforts.

Questions or comments about local forecasts or local advisories/watches/warnings need to be submitted to the issuing local Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs). The local WFOs are listed at: <http://www.weather.gov/organization.php>.

There is no endorsement, implied or otherwise, by the NWS of any fan posts, links, or photos. Writers/fans are fully responsible for the content they submit.

Your comments are important to us and others who read these pages. It's important to remember that our weather community includes people of all ages and backgrounds. What seems funny to one person might be truly offensive to another. From our experience, the people who join in the dialog on these pages mostly self-moderate each other. The NWS posting policy is intended to set clear guidelines on what is appropriate for these pages. Above all, posted comments must be appropriate for all ages and be courteous and respectful of others and related to matters, activities, programs, policies or operations relevant to the NWS. NWS has established the following posting policies and reserves the right to delete postings that are inconsistent with them. Therefore, it is our policy to remove any comment that:

- is from anyone younger than 13 years of age;
- contains defamatory, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, hateful, intimidating, or otherwise offensive language;
- contains malicious or offensive comments based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, national origin, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other classification;
- contains advertisements, endorsements, or promotions, including spam and similar content;
- contains comments on matters unrelated to activities of the National Weather Service or its programs, policies, operations, or general areas of responsibility;
- contains impersonations or misrepresents the writer's identity or affiliation;
- contains viruses or similar harmful programs;
- contains proprietary information or intellectual property that is posted without the approval of the owner;
- recommends that members of the public contact a member of Congress or of a state or local legislature;
- contains comments regarding a candidate in a partisan political campaign or regarding a political party; or
- contains information that violates a local, state, or national law.

For more about NWS use of Facebook and other social networking services, see the page at: <http://www.weather.gov/credits.php#socialmedia>

**c. Audience:**

This experimental service will be expanded to all WFOs, River Forecast Centers (RFCs), and National Centers.

The audience served by this service includes any member of the general public served by the area of coverage area of a participating office.

**Note:** Access to some features of this experimental service (e.g., posting content to Facebook) requires a Facebook account (see [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com)). Use of Facebook to support this service does not imply an endorsement of Facebook.

**d. Presentation Format:**

Information will be presented on Facebook as brief posts to the local office fan page. A hyperlink may be provided within the post to more detailed information on an official NWS webpage, as required.

**e. Feedback Method:**

Comments will be compiled through *April 30, 2012* and will be evaluated by NWS prior to a decision on operational implementation. Feedback can be submitted through an electronic survey

<http://www.weather.gov/survey/nws-survey.php?code=lofb>).

#### **f. SDD Approval**

This Experimental SDD has been approved by David Caldwell, OCWWS Director.

### **Part 2 – Technical**

#### **a. Format and Science Basis:**

Most Facebook content will be manually posted to the local pages directly through the Facebook interface or through a social media dashboard such as Hootsuite.

A Facebook application has been developed and tested that allows offices to automatically post NWS products if so desired.

#### **b. Availability:**

Dissemination of environmental information via Facebook is considered a supplemental service. Availability of this service is subject to constraints of Facebook service availability and to availability limitations of the users' internet connection.

Manual entries by NWS, as well as responses to user posts, will be made on a time available basis.