

Guidelines for Responding to Social Media Comments

COMPOSING YOUR RESPONSE:

- Our goal is public education. Just the facts, please. Point to existing, approved information and resources when you can.
- Don't be preachy! Strive to be supportive, educational and informative.
- Engage in constructive conversation. We do not respond to posts that include words like "stupid" or other insults.
- When drafting messages, think about the *why* and the *benefit* to the person.
- Any time your draft says "*you*", think about how you can turn that around to "*we*". For example, "what is your issue?" can be "how can we help?"
- Stay away from passive voice... "was" and "were" with an "-ing" verb.
- Sometimes the right response will be..."stay tuned, we're researching."
- Messages should sound like there's a person behind them. Where possible, use the name of the person you're responding to and strive to show compassion.
- Don't be afraid to use content and messages from existing material, such as speaking points, your website, FAQs, presentations, etc.

ENGAGEMENT:

- Determine your goal response time. Social conversations move quickly and you don't want to leave commenters hanging too long, especially if they've said something false or negative. Ideally, you should respond to comments within 24 hours, so establish reviewing and responding to comments as a daily task.
- You are never alone. These are judgement calls. Find a thought partner if you are unsure.
- Look back at the feed for any comments or questions that haven't been answered for whatever reason. They often provide an opportunity for education even if they've been there a day or two.
- Do what we can to take the conversation offline. Suggest that the poster send a DM with additional details if the situation warrants. *Remember, with some platforms, you have to follow the poster before they can DM us.* Nothing is more frustrating than asking someone to DM you and then not allowing them to.

- ❑ Never, except under the most extenuating circumstances, should we respond to direct opinions or straight comments. If we create the right kind of atmosphere on our social platforms, our followers will react to each other without us needing to jump in. Exceptions would be misinformation that could be harmful, if something seems to be getting legs of its own, or if the poster has an unusually large following. Let's discuss before jumping in.
- ❑ They used to say not to argue with people who buy ink by the barrel. The same holds true for people with lots of time and anonymity on the big, bad web. Respond to a question. Clarify once if needed. If it can't be avoided, go one more round. After that, let it go. We will not win the emotion game; we are here to inform and educate.