



Department Policy No. 6  
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POLICY  
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## Public Information

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### Agency Contact

Policy and Communications Chief

### Purpose

The Public Information Policy of the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) enables the production and dissemination of communications that support the agency's vision of becoming the premier organization for trust management and resource protection in the western United States. It is the policy of IDL to develop and implement a strong media and public relations program to support the missions of the entire department.

### Scope

Applies to all IDL employees.

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# I. Policy

## A. Email Format and Signatures

1. All email communication should follow standard business format and use consistent email signatures to align with agency standards.
2. The "[Email Signature Template](#)" [guidance document](#) is incorporated by reference into this policy. It provides an email signature template and outlines agency standards for email signatures.

## B. Communication Services

1. IDL will pursue a positive public image by disseminating pertinent information to the public and the news media and by anticipating what the public wants or needs to know about the agency and its activities. All outreach and public information strategies will be conducted with integrity, keeping in mind the agency's responsibilities to the endowment trust beneficiaries as well as other parties and constituencies to which IDL is accountable.
2. The Policy and Communications Chief oversees and coordinates all media relations and media efforts by IDL, at all levels. Public Information Officers (PIOs) report to the Chief and help fulfill the duties outlined in this policy.
3. The Policy and Communications Chief is responsible for oversight of all agency media activities, ultimately at the discretion of the Director. The Chief is responsible to the Director and provides timely information to internal stakeholders, interested parties, and the public about IDL operations, policies, and decisions. Maximizing the flow and content of information ensures that IDL and its mission are better understood and received by the public.
4. Divisions are encouraged to use the communication services provided under this policy. The services offered include, but are not limited to:
  - Developing communication strategies
  - Building and updating web pages
  - Managing the navigation structure, aesthetics, and functionality of [www.idl.idaho.gov](http://www.idl.idaho.gov)
  - Consulting on the design, layout, and functionality of other IDL websites and online applications
  - Handling media inquiries
  - Drafting news releases and media advisories
  - Developing social media content
  - Administering social media channels and responding to social interactions
  - Writing original content or editing content composed by others
  - Preparing publications, reports, infographics, and other collateral materials
  - Designing graphics and laying out publications
  - Pitching stories to reporters
  - Producing videos (including filming and post-production editing)

5. Divisions must consult with the Policy and Communications Chief or a PIO prior to contracting with an external provider for communication services. In many cases, division needs can be met with existing IDL communications team resources.
6. Any content or information provided to the public by IDL, posted to an IDL public-facing website, produced in a publicly-distributed IDL publication, or collected during an interview may be used to develop additional materials for public distribution or posted to IDL's social media accounts.
7. The legal definition of a "state publication," along with other laws related to printing, is included in [Idaho Code Title 60](#), Chapters 1 and 2.

## C. Media Inquiries and Requests for Interviews

Members of the news media and representatives of other interests often approach IDL staff by phone, email, and in person for interviews or information related to the agency's work.

1. If an employee is contacted by the media, he or she should make note of the reporter's name, contact information, deadline, and information requested, then relay the information to a PIO for guidance.
2. All IDL employees must notify a PIO before giving an interview to the news media.

### *Exceptions:*

- For inquiries about active fires, see the [Fire Information section](#) of this policy.
  - Employees representing IDL in an official capacity during a public appearance may give interviews; see the [Public Appearances section](#) of this policy.
3. After giving an interview, employees must report back to a PIO as soon as possible detailing the nature of the inquiry as well as the response.
  4. Inquiries concerning the opinions or positions of an individual Land Board member will be referred to the Director and the Land Board member's office.
  5. The Policy and Communications Chief will inform the staff of Land Board members on media inquiries when deemed appropriate.
  6. The Deputy Director, Division Administrators, Bureau Chiefs, Operations Chiefs, and Area Managers are encouraged to plan for issues of public interest by consulting with the Policy and Communications Chief on matters that may attract media attention.

## D. Fire Information

Responses to media requests for information about active fires are handled differently than other media requests.

1. Fire Information Duty Officers (FIDOs) serve at the discretion of their various divisions; however, when they are participating as a Fire Information Duty Officer during the initial attack on an IDL fire incident, they report to a PIO. Authorization for FIDOs to interact with the media is limited solely to active fire incidents during their duty rotation.
2. Incident-specific questions about active fires on IDL protected areas will be referred to the Operations Chief, Area Manager, Fire Warden, or other designated individual for response;

or for assistance in preparing a response that is issued by the FIDO, the FIDO will work with those parties to prepare a response.

3. FIDOs may post content to all IDL social media channels and [www.idl.idaho.gov](http://www.idl.idaho.gov) using the access prescribed by the Policy and Communications Chief. News releases and media advisories issued by FIDOs will be provided to the webmaster and a PIO via emails to [webmaster@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:webmaster@idl.idaho.gov) and [pio@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:pio@idl.idaho.gov).
4. Questions about IDL fire programs that are not specific to a fire incident must be referred to a PIO. Incident-specific questions about closed fires must also be referred to a PIO.
5. During fire season, communications produced by FIDOs related to active fire incidents and life-safety matters will have priority distribution on IDL's social media channels.
6. The "Fire Information for IDL Offices" guidance document is incorporated by reference into this policy. It is updated annually by a PIO and provides local IDL staff including Operations Chiefs, Area Managers, Area Administrative Assistants, and Fire Wardens detailed information on how to deal with incident-specific questions from the media and the public that are received at the area or field office level. The document is available from a PIO.

## **E. Inquiries from Elected Officials**

Employees are strongly encouraged to share details of work-related conversations they may have with county, legislative, or state level elected officials with the Policy and Communications Chief, Deputy Director, or the Director. Details of communications with any elected officials about any issues that are likely to be controversial should also be shared.

## **F. Outreach by Employees**

All IDL employees are encouraged to think of opportunities to educate the public about IDL's operations and successes, then share their ideas with a PIO. This includes taking photos and videos for use on IDL's social media channels. Employees are also encouraged to develop positive working relationships with members of the community.

## **G. Public Appearances and Personal Opinions on IDL Policy Issues**

With supervisor approval, employees are encouraged to speak as an IDL representative and participate in civic and other programs in their communities in order to increase the public's knowledge and overall understanding of IDL's operations. Such appearances also allow IDL to better understand the needs of the communities in which it does business.

1. **Appearances on Behalf of the Department**—If appearing on behalf of IDL, employees will present factual information within their area of expertise and respond as helpfully as possible to questions and requests from members of the public and media. This includes explaining IDL's official position, avoiding personal opinions, and reporting the details of the interaction to one's supervisor.

If an audience member or a member of the media has a question related to an area outside of an employee's expertise, the employee will offer to find the answer and report the question back to their supervisor and a PIO. If a question posed relates to IDL budgets or policies and issues, the employee will refer the news media representative to a PIO for further clarification.

2. **Appearances as a Private Individual**—Employees who wish to make public appearances or testify as private citizens, and not as representatives of IDL, must make those appearances during off-duty hours and make it clear they represent their own personal views, not those of IDL.
3. **Personal Opinions of Employees on IDL Policy Issues**—Employees who wish to publicly share personal opinions about an IDL policy issue must present their opinions during off-duty hours using personal equipment and property. They must make it clear they represent their own personal views and not those of IDL, and adhere to the principles of the [Ethics in Government Manual](#).

## H. News Releases and Media Advisories

All news releases and media advisories from IDL will be reviewed and distributed by a PIO and posted to [www.idl.idaho.gov](http://www.idl.idaho.gov).

## I. Websites

1. The primary website for providing the public accurate and up-to-date information about IDL is [www.idl.idaho.gov](http://www.idl.idaho.gov). Different functions within IDL will be represented on the primary website and may be supported by ancillary websites or online applications.
2. Information presented on all IDL websites and online applications will be kept current, and outdated information will be taken offline.
  - a. IDL's divisions are responsible for ensuring the content related to their functions included on the primary website is kept current and accurate by working with the agency's webmaster.
  - b. Divisions using ancillary websites or online applications other than the agency's primary website are solely responsible for keeping content on that platform current and accurate.
3. Website content on <http://www.idl.idaho.gov> will be maintained by the PIO or other authorized staff. Requests to update website content will be submitted to [webmaster@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:webmaster@idl.idaho.gov); rulemaking web updates should be emailed to [rulemaking@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:rulemaking@idl.idaho.gov). Divisions with special web needs may be authorized to post directly to the primary website, pending approval of the Policy and Communications Chief.
4. Divisions seeking to launch new websites or online applications must coordinate with the Policy and Communications Chief to confirm there is a valid business need to host the content on an auxiliary site, and that the site will match the agency's online branding. New websites and applications must be accessible to individuals with disabilities and conform with best practices for search engine optimization. The Policy and Communications Chief will need to be advised before discontinuing an auxiliary site or application to ensure any links broken on the primary website are addressed.

## J. Social Media

1. All social media accounts for the agency will be administered under the direction of the Policy and Communications Chief. Requests to post material or messages to an IDL social media account may be sent to [webmaster@idl.idaho.gov](mailto:webmaster@idl.idaho.gov).

2. All new IDL social media accounts, channels, or online groups must be approved in advance by the Policy and Communications Chief.
3. IDL employees should never use their state email account in conjunction with a personal social networking site nor should they display, use or copy IDL's logo for personal use.

## K. Communications Plan

1. The Policy and Communications Chief shall develop and implement a Communications Plan that will be reviewed and updated at least annually.
2. The plan will contain communication objectives for at least the current year and serves as the basic framework for managing internal and external communications.
3. Division Administrators are responsible for coordinating their division's media and public information needs with the Policy and Communications Chief at least annually, and preferably more frequently. The Policy and Communications Chief and PIOs may work directly with Operations Chiefs, Area Managers, Bureau Chiefs, and Program Managers to address their divisions' communications needs.

## II. References

- A. [Idaho Code Title 60](#), Chapters 1 and 2 – Public Printing and Official Notices
- B. [Email Signature Template](#) – IDL guidance document available on the intranet Policies page
- C. [Ethics in Government Manual](#), Idaho Office of the Attorney General
- D. Fire Information for IDL Offices – IDL guidance document (available from a PIO)

## III. Implementation

This policy revision is effective immediately and will remain in effect for five years unless amended, replaced, or rescinded prior to expiration.



DUSTIN T. MILLER  
Director

November 8, 2021

Date

## IV. Revision History

11-26-2012	Policy approved
07-08-2013	Revised
11-01-2021	Revised by Policy and Communications Chief