

Why and how NALC uses social media



Do you feel like the last person on Earth who isn't on social media?

Maybe you avoid it because it seems useless or annoying, or maybe you use it only on rare occasions. Maybe you just haven't learned how to use it. Whatever the reason, you might wonder why a union of letter carriers has embraced social media. The simple answer: NALC is a union built on communication.


Social media—internet tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many more—rapidly introduced a whole new way to communicate.


“The days of viewing the internet as a competitor with mail are over,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “The future of the Postal Service, and the U.S. economy, involves the partnership between the internet and the Postal Service that makes e-commerce possible. Social media is another tool for us to use to our advantage.”

New ways to communicate


Social media makes it easy to receive and send information quickly, of course, but it also allows for feedback and discussion and makes it easy to share information with others. That makes it a vital tool for letter carriers to reach each other and to broadcast our message to the public at large.

While NALC mails millions of letters, parcels and publications, including *The Postal Record*, each year, the union also uses social media to reach members and the public. NALC interacts with the world through the core social media channels. You've probably heard of most of these channels, and you may be on some of them. Whatever your preferred social media connection, these are the ways NALC reaches out to the world:

 **Twitter** users post short messages—each is limited to 280 characters—and images. They “follow” other users to automatically receive their posts in their “feed.” It was designed with smartphones in mind.

 **Facebook** works on a similar basis, but without the character limits and with more options and functions. You can connect with friends, join groups and follow organizations like NALC to get news.

 **Instagram** focuses on images to tell stories.

 **YouTube** hosts videos. Users can post a video, watch them on the site, easily share them and make comments.

 **Flickr** is where NALC shares photos of its own activities and events.

The simplest way to keep up with NALC is to open an account on one or more of these channels and search for “NALC.” News and images will appear automatically. That's all there is to it.

But if you want to take it to another level, you can post comments and share information with others.

“Social media is a great way to stay connected, and that's what a union is all about,” Rolando said. “Just as the postal network we provide connects the nation, social media is another way to assure that everyone has access to information.”

As an example of the power of social media for NALC members, Rolando pointed to the national convention held in Detroit last summer. Using all of NALC's social media channels, the union sent images and information out for every NALC member to help them understand what was happen-

ing on the convention floor and in the workshops.

“The experience of following the convention on social media brings everyone into the room with the delegates,” Rolando said, “and gives them unprecedented access to their union.”

Tips and tricks

If you don't have accounts with a social media outlet, simply sign up. To use it on your smartphone, the best way is to download the app that goes with it. Then find people and groups to follow, starting, of course, with NALC.

For easy reference, NALC's Facebook page is [facebook.com/nalc.national](https://www.facebook.com/nalc.national) and its Twitter “handle,” or name, is @NALC_National.

Now you can keep up with all the news and information about NALC. But why not broaden the reach of NALC's message by sharing items with others? Simply click on “share” on Facebook or “retweet” on Twitter to pass them on.

Before you share, though, consider this advice from NALC's Communications and Media Relations Department.

First, it's probably best to restrict all of your social media interactions to your own time—when you're off the clock and out of uniform.

Second, learn to crawl before you run—check out how other people use social media and learn the etiquette for sharing and discussing things. Look at how other people use Facebook, Twitter and other sites and learn from them.

Finally, be sure you are following only official NALC social media outlets. Some have NALC's name in them but that doesn't mean they speak for the union.

For branches

Using social media outlets is a great way to enhance, or even recharge, a branch's traditional communication outlets—a newsletter and website. Social media puts news and information in front of branch members instantly and easily, and shares news from other sources. And it gives them an easy way to respond. Many branches have their own Facebook pages or Twitter feeds to keep members current and connected.

In fact, many branches use a Facebook page instead of a website because it is quicker and easier, not to mention free.

And anyone with a smartphone has both a camera and computer in their pocket, allowing them to take photos anywhere, any time and share them, or see what others post.

While social media allows anyone to comment and join a discussion, starting an official branch Facebook, Twitter or other outlet should come with branch leadership approval, NALC Mobilization Director **Ed Morgan** said. It's best to treat it like Branch Items in *The Postal Record*, which the *NALC Constitution* reserves for a branch president or designated scribe.

A letter carrier, whether a branch officer or not, posting something unofficial on social media should make it clear that it's a personal opinion, and always stay positive, Morgan added.

“You should be clear that you're speaking for yourself,” he said. “Make sure it's positive toward letter carriers, not negative toward the Postal Service.”

Also, don't get personal or use insults and don't stray too far from the

topic. And keep in mind that conversations on social media lack social cues—facial expressions, voice inflection, and the like—that help people understand your meaning. Make sure you're crystal clear, especially if you're being sarcastic or making a joke.

As for what to post, it's easy to link to NALC's website or social media posts for accurate and complete information. If you rely on other sources, beware of using any news or information that doesn't come directly from a news site with a solid reputation, as misinformation is so easy to spread on social media.

Use with caution

Another important safety rule for using social media is to remember that anything you post may be visible to anyone—including postal managers and the public—and may be there forever.

“Make sure you only use social media off the clock and don't post anything, in text or images, that could get you or anyone else in trouble with the Postal Service or shine a bad light on letter carriers,” President Rolando said. “It's always a good idea to take a moment to think before you hit the ‘post’ button. Could it be used against you in discipline, or just make you look bad? Then leave it out.”

To get quick and accurate information from NALC on your smartphone, you also can download the NALC Member App. Simply go to the Apple or Google Play app stores and search for “NALC Member App” and download it to your phone. You can customize the app to subscribe to different topics that will then notify you when something is posted. **PR**