

Revitalizing the Bristol Fire Department Social Media Presence

Proposal for Public Engagement, Recruitment, and Information Sharing

Abstract

This proposal outlines a six-month plan to establish a social media presence for the Bristol Fire Department (BFD) on Facebook, Instagram, and X. The primary goals are to strengthen recruitment (including the launch of a new high school junior firefighter program), improve community education, provide timely emergency alerts, and increase department transparency. The plan begins with biweekly content aligned to the department's internal schedule and scales up to a multi-post-per-week cadence. The proposal also details the steps needed to implement the program successfully and includes a list of recommended training opportunities to support long-term success and professionalism.

I. Why Social Media Matters for Bristol Fire

1. Community Engagement & Transparency

Social media builds trust and opens a channel for residents to understand what BFD does beyond emergencies.

2. Emergency Alerts & Public Safety

Real-time alerts help warn the public of red flag days, road closures, power outages, or fire weather concerns.

3. Public Education

Posts focused on smoke alarm reminders, safe heating practices, and seasonal fire risks serve a prevention mission.

4. Recruitment & Junior Firefighter Program Support

Member spotlights, junior highlights, and service testimonials showcase the value of volunteering and create connection.

5. Current Gap

BFD currently has no social media presence. As a result, the department lacks visibility and an accessible public-facing voice.

II. The Bristol Fire Social Media Plan

Platform Use

- **Facebook:** Key updates, recruitment, community engagement
- **Instagram:** Visual content (apparatus, crews, infographics)
- **X:** Alerts, quick updates, and public safety info

Content Types

- Apparatus spotlights (1 post per vehicle over the first month)
- Member profiles (starting with Chief Officers, expanding monthly)
- Public safety and prevention tips
- Incident recaps (non-sensitive only)
- Junior program highlights
- Training and event coverage

Tone & Style

Professional, community-friendly, and approachable. Posts will follow department branding and use consistent formatting and language.

III. Six-Month Rollout Timeline

Months 1–2: Foundation & Apparatus Introductions - Secure town and Chief approval; create account governance plan - Launch social media accounts and finalize branding (logos, templates, etc.) - Begin posting every other week, starting with truck spotlights

Months 3–4: Member Spotlights & Public Education - Continue biweekly cadence
- Introduce member profiles starting with Chief Officers
- Begin rotating in fire prevention and public safety content tied to recent training nights

Months 5–6: Weekly Posting and Junior Program Launch - Shift to weekly content cadence
- Start junior-focused posts (program launch, participant intros)
- Balance member profiles, apparatus content, and training recaps

Post-Month 6 Goal:

Establish routine of 2–3 posts per week:

- **Monday:** Safety or educational content
- **Wednesday:** Member/junior highlight
- **Friday or Saturday:** Incident summary, event, or behind-the-scenes

This timeline supports sustainable growth while ensuring consistent, engaging content tied to the department's operational rhythm.

IV. Steps for Implementation

Step	Task
1. Town Approval & Policy	Seek formal sign-off; designate roles and content approval chain
2. Account Creation	Secure handles (e.g., @BristolVTFire); set up cross-platform admin tools
3. Branding & Templates	Establish graphic templates using Canva (free for nonprofits)
4. Content Backlog	Prepare 4–6 starter posts before launch
5. Soft Launch	Internal promotion followed by public launch
6. Content Scheduling	Use Meta Business Suite or similar to plan posts
7. Monitor & Adapt	Review engagement monthly; adjust frequency and types of content

V. Recommended Training for Social Media Management

These courses are not required at launch but are strongly recommended for anyone managing department social media. They can be completed as available, helping to ensure quality, compliance, and effectiveness.

Foundational FEMA/EMI Courses - IS-42: Social Media in Emergency Management

<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-42>

- **IS-29: Public Information Officer Awareness**
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-29>
- **G289/E389: Public Information Officer Series (Advanced)**
Offered through FEMA or state-level fire academies

Other High-Quality Courses - PER-344: Social Media Tools & Techniques (Center for Domestic Preparedness)

<https://cdp.dhs.gov/find-training>

- **JGPR Academy: Social Media for First Responders**
<https://jgpracademy.com>
 - **BGSU Fire School: Communicating Effectively in the Fire Service**
<https://www.bgsu.edu/state-fire-school>
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Conclusion

The Bristol Fire Department has an opportunity to build a sustainable, community-focused social media presence that supports recruitment, public education, and transparency. With minimal cost and phased growth, this plan provides a manageable way to launch and scale operations. Long-term success will depend on consistent content, stakeholder support, and occasional professional development.

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