

Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

Title

Communications Policy

Policy Number

KB0013516 v3.0

Details

Fermilab Communications Policy

1. Purpose

Communicating science to the public is an important part of Fermilab's mission. This goal is advanced by the many scientists, engineers, and other Fermilab staff and users who have chosen to engage with members of the public, including the press. This activity is encouraged and supported by lab management, who recognize the importance of these efforts. This policy establishes requirements, guidelines, roles and responsibilities for communicating laboratory-related information or when using a Fermilab affiliation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to Fermilab employees, users and affiliates. **engaged in written or verbal communications** with:

- the public, via media outlets and interactions with members of the media
- the public, via social media tools, technologies and platforms, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube
- members of local and regional communities
- the public, employees, users and affiliates during times of crisis
- the public, employees, users and affiliates in the context of political activity
- other Fermilab employees, users, affiliates and professional colleagues both internally at Fermilab and externally at meetings and conferences

3. Applicability

This policy applies to all Fermilab employees, users and affiliates.

4. Effective Date and Date Reviewed/Updated

This policy went into effect on October 15, 2015. It was revised on July 11, 2019 and on August 1, 2021.

5. Policy

All employees, users and affiliates are encouraged to communicate with the media and public about the scientific and technological dimensions of their work in an objective and nonpartisan fashion while ensuring full compliance with limits on disclosure of proprietary, export-controlled and classified information. When carrying out communication activities, employees, users and affiliates are expected to conduct themselves to the highest standards of integrity and follow all related DOE requirements and Fermilab policies and procedures. As stated in the DOE Policy on Scientific Integrity, all scientists, engineers, and others supported by the DOE are free and encouraged to share their scientific findings and views. These personnel are also free to share their personal views and opinions on scientific or technical related policy matters, provided they do not attribute these views to Fermilab, the DOE, or the U.S. Government and follow applicable law.

The following sections describe specific guidelines and requirements for communication by Fermilab employees/users/affiliates **acting on behalf of the laboratory** with:

- Interactions with members of the media and communications to the public via general/ mass media outlets (5.a)
- Publishing or announcing scientific results (5.b)
- Social media (5.c)
- Website communications and governance for Fermilab's web presence (5.d)
- Community relations, including members of local and regional communities (5.e)
- Crisis communications for employees, users and the public as appropriate (5.f)
- Political activity by employees (5.g)
- Professional, technical and personal communications by employees and users (5.h)
- Colleagues and peers, both at the laboratory and in external venues such as conferences and in collaboration activities (5.i)

5.a Fermilab's policy is to be forthcoming, accurate and timely when communicating information to the public through mass media. Mass media includes any publication or technology that distributes news or other information for a broad audience, including but not limited to print and online newspapers, magazines, blogs and other types of publications; television, radio and video programs, including those hosted online; podcasts and other recordings; and social media platforms operated by a mass media company.

The Office of Communication has the primary responsibility for communicating and coordinating with media outlets and is a resource for Fermilab employees, users and affiliates in their media interactions. In this capacity, the Office of Communication responds to media inquiries, researches media outlets, obtains clearance as appropriate from DOE, prepares for interviews by coordinating with reporters/journalists, arranges site visits for journalists, performs fact-checking, conducts media training for Fermilab employees and spokespersons, prepares talking points, coordinates and attends media interviews as requested, conducts post-interview follow-up, amplifies media coverage through Fermilab channels and provides media performance metrics.

The **Framework for obtaining clearance from the Office of Communication and Social Media Engagement Procedure** outlines the procedure for employees, users and affiliates to follow for consulting with the Office of Communication before speaking with the media or before providing content to media outlets.

This procedure also defines the requirement for the Office of Communication to provide notification [for awareness only] to DOE and in specific cases obtain appropriate DOE clearance [explicit approval] prior to media interactions by employees and users (see Framework for lab and site media coordination with DOE).

The procedure also covers greater detail in terms of media visits to Fermilab, content approvals, presentations to broad audiences, media relations during a crisis or emergency, and social media engagement.

5.b Fermilab employees should inform the Office of Communication of any planned publication or announcement of significant scientific results involving Fermilab-hosted experiments or Fermilab scientists, prior to the release of the publication or announcement of the significant results. This advance notice is not intended as a review of the scientific paper or results, but rather to prepare for and provide appropriate publicity of those significant results at the time they are announced or publicized.

5.c Social media is an important component of Fermilab's communication strategy. Our purpose is to share the laboratory's and our fellow collaborators' latest news, attract future talent, foster a love of science and physics, educate the public and join a global scientific and technological

conversation in an engaging and transparent fashion. Social media platforms include (but are not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. The Office of Communication is responsible for the content of Fermilab's official social media channels. Please see the **Framework for obtaining clearance from the Office of Communication and Social Media Engagement Procedure for guidance on employee engagement.**

5.d The Fermilab [Website Governance Policy](#) includes the minimum requirements website owners must meet in order to make content accessible via the Fermilab web presence. The policy covers all web accessible information in the fnal.gov domain and/or hosted on servers within the Fermilab network. For questions regarding web governance or this policy, contact the Office of Communication at ocweb@fnal.gov.

5.e All employees are encouraged to effectively communicate appropriate information about the laboratory to their friends, neighbors and communities, within the guidelines set forth in this and other Fermilab policies. The Office of Education and Public Engagement, working with the Office of Communication, maintains the primary responsibility for community relations, including developing a full program of activities to keep members of the laboratory's local and regional communities informed and solicit citizen feedback and input.

All comments or complaints from the public or other stakeholders that raise issues that could reflect on Fermilab's reputation should be forwarded to the head of the Office of Communication with information on the nature of the comment or complaint and, if available, contact information for the person providing the feedback.

5.f All employees, users and affiliates are expected to follow the [Fermilab Statement of Community Standards](#) when engaging with co-workers, sharing information and contributing to discussions at meetings and via other information exchanges. The Office of Communication has the primary responsibility for disseminating relevant laboratory-related information for employees and users via the most appropriate channels.

All posters that employees, users and affiliates wish to display in a common area at Fermilab to advertise an event, group, or activity must first be approved by the Office of Communication. Requests should be sent to news@fnal.gov.

5.g Fermilab's policy is to make accurate information available as soon as possible during potentially life- and operations-threatening situations. The Office of Communication has the primary responsibility for communicating crisis-related information to members of the public, including news media. All inquiries from members of the media must be directed to the Office of Communication at media@fnal.gov during a crisis or emergency situation.

Employees are not allowed to post any crisis- or emergency-related content (text, images, or videos) to their personal or laboratory-owned social media accounts aside from sharing or retweeting official Fermilab all-hands messages or emergency services posts.

Depending on the type of crisis or emergency situation, employees on site will be informed of the situation and actions to take via the emergency messaging system and/or the sitewide emergency warning system. Employees who are off site will be notified via the emergency messaging system. It is the responsibility of all on-site employees and users to maintain up-to-date emergency messaging contact information in [FermiWorks](#).

5.h Fermilab employees, users and affiliates who engage in political activities must not use their Fermilab affiliation as a credential, present themselves as representatives of FRA or the laboratory, or use laboratory property while participating in the activities. Examples of prohibited activities include but are not limited to signing a campaign letter with one's Fermilab affiliation and sending a lobbying letter to a member of Congress on Fermilab letterhead, from a Fermilab email account or from a Fermilab computer.

All visits to the Fermilab site by elected officials or political candidates are subject to DOE regulations and must be coordinated in advance through the Office of the Director, which will work with the relevant Fermilab offices. The [Interactions with Government Officials](#) policy details the guidelines and requirements for interactions with and visits to the Fermilab site by government officials, including elected officials.

5.i Fermilab employees, users and affiliates are expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of professional integrity and to follow all related Fermilab policies and procedures when communicating with colleagues and peers, both at the laboratory and in external venues such as conferences and in collaboration activities. Employees are expected to adhere to the [Fermilab Statement of Community Standards](#).

In addition to following laboratory-wide policies (including [Policy on Export Control](#), Science, Technology Risk Matrix Protection Policy, the Intellectual Property Policy and other policies identified in section 8 covering data, technology and information sharing) and respecting proprietary information and copyrights, Fermilab employees, users and affiliates should follow all processes, procedures and guidelines established by their managers and supervisors regarding work-related professional and technical communication. The [Policy on Photography and Videography of Technical Systems](#) addresses photography and videography of technology on site at Fermilab in public and non-public areas.

Employees, users and affiliates who are members of scientific collaborations must also follow those organizations' rules and bylaws regarding public discussion of scientific results and other code of conduct policies. [Technical Publications](#) manages the scientific/technical publications review process and the DOE requirements for sharing and publishing scientific and technical information. All FRA employees and guest scientists, visitors, users and members of a collaboration reporting work done using Fermilab facilities must submit scientific/technical publications for review by [requesting a report number](#) or contacting Technical Publications (630-840-5693, techpubs@fnal.gov). These publications include theses, preprints intended for publication in peer-reviewed journals, conference reports, technical memos, short papers not intended for journals or conferences and poster and presentations.

Fermilab listservs and email groups are not to be used for personal communications.

6. Definitions

For the purpose of this document, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory may be referred to as Fermilab or laboratory. Additionally, to make the policy easily understandable, although Fermilab is a place and not a legal entity or an employer, Fermi Research Alliance, LLC (FRA) employees are referred to as Fermilab employees.

7. Responsibilities

While this policy applies to all Fermilab employees, users and affiliates, there are additional responsibilities for the following individuals and groups:

The **head of the Office of Communication** is responsible and accountable for all laboratory-related communication activities, overall reputational management and for developing and carrying out an overall strategic plan for lab communications.

The **head of the Office of Education and Public Engagement** is responsible and accountable for community relations, working with the Office of Communication.

The **Fermilab leadership team** is committed to a coordinated and consistent approach to communicating laboratory messages both internally and externally. This commitment requires including Office of Communication staff in the planning processes of the laboratory, divisions and sections, as well as in ongoing operational activities. Leadership also ensures that communication activities and costs are integrated into the laboratory's overall planning and budgeting processes.

Managers and supervisors are expected to regularly and effectively communicate laboratory-related information to their departments, as well as to maintain open and inviting channels for staff to communicate with them.

Employees, users and affiliates are expected to regularly and effectively communicate with their co-workers and supervisors, consistent with the Fermilab Statement of Community Standards and to actively inform themselves of lab-related news and information.

8. Authorities

FRA Contract (DE-AC02-07CH11359)

Section C

Clauses C.3.1.3 (LABORATORY STEWARDSHIP)

Section I

Clauses I.72 (PUBLIC AFFAIRS), I.103 (COMMUNITY COMMITMENT)

9. Owner

The head of the Office of Communication is the owner of this policy.

10. Review Cycle

This policy shall be reviewed every 2 years.

11. Communication Plan

The requirements of this policy shall be communicated by the Office of Communication to all employees, and periodic training shall be provided to Management System Owners and Chiefs/Division Heads/Section Heads/Project Directors. This policy shall be available in the Fermilab policy database. The head of the Office of Communication is responsible for the communication of this policy.

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