

Veterans Guide to Navigating Social Media Safely: Avoid Common Scams While Using Your Favorite Social Media Platforms

Social Media Today

In today's digital age, social media is a powerful tool for helping Veterans connect with friends and family, accessing information, and sharing experiences. For Veterans, social media can also provide a sense of community and support.

However, with the rise of social media, the importance of protecting personal information online has become key. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to equipping Veterans with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate social media safely. This fact sheet offers essential tips to ensure Veterans safety and manage their online presence effectively.

Secure Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

PII is any information that can be used as its own or with other information to identify, contact, or locate a single person. Some examples are a Veterans ID number, Social Security Number, Name, Driver's License, address, medical records and so on.

- Avoid sharing personal information such as your address, phone number, and date of birth if possible. The more you share, the easier it may be for someone to use that information to steal your identity.
- Use strong passwords and enabling Multi-factor Authentication (MFA), sometimes

called two-factor authentication or two-step verification which adds an extra layer of security to your accounts to help prevent your social media accounts from being hacked.

Secure your Finances

Never share your bank account or credit card information on social media. Protect yourself from identity theft and financial fraud by keeping your financial details confidential.

Avoid Geotagging

Tagging your location on your social media posts is a fun way to share your personal life with friends and family but, it also informs the wrong people, that no one is at home.

- Avoid sharing your location with everyone on social media.

Manage Privacy Settings

Review privacy settings by regularly checking and updating the privacy settings on your social media accounts to control who can see your information.

- Limit public access by setting your profiles to "private" or "friends-only" to limit exposure to unknown individuals.
- Be mindful when sharing your military profile and military history.

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Recognize Phishing Attempts

Be wary of suspicious messages from unknown senders or those asking for personal information. Cybercriminals use fake emails, Direct Messages, or social media posts to lure users to click on a bad link or download a malicious file.

- Verify before clicking on any links, hover over them to check the URL and ensure it leads to a legitimate site.
- If you receive a suspicious message, report it to the platform's support team and do not click on any links within the message.

Report suspected privacy concerns or misuse of your VA benefits to your local VA Privacy Officer immediately. Click [here](#) for information about how you can report privacy complaints.

- [Report Privacy Complaint](#)

Separate Fact from Fiction

Social media can spread false information so don't fall for fake news or offers that seem too good to be true. Check the credibility of the source by staying informed.

Stay Informed

With more and more online scams emerging, it is important to stay informed of the latest online security and privacy tips from trusted VA organizations and utilize their guidance.

Here are a few trusted sources for staying informed:

- [VA Privacy Website](#)
- [VA News and Information](#)
- [Federal Trade Commission: Consumer Advice](#)
- [VA Cybersecurity Spot](#)

Social Media Usage Among Service Members and Families:

A 2020 survey of military consumers in the U.S. revealed, active-duty military members consumed more media than the general population.

It also mentioned, 90% of service members and military spouses have at least one social media account. With the increased use of social media among active service members, it is also important to note, most or all service members who use social media in the military will continue to use after leaving the service.

Lastly, Always Protect Yourself

By following these guidelines, you can enjoy the benefits of social media while safeguarding yourself against scams. Stay vigilant and protect your hard-earned benefits and personal information.

Contact Us

For general privacy related questions or concerns, you can reach out to VA Privacy Service at 202-273-5070 or privacyservice@va.gov