Beat: Technology

NEW FACEBOOK POLICY ALLOWS SOCILA MEDIA IMMORTALITY

LEGACY CONTACT

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USPA NEWS - Death may take your body, but it doesn't have to extinguish your online persona.
Facebook announced Thursday that it will allow you to designate a friend or family member to be your Facebook estate executor and manage your account when you're dead.

Starting today, Facebook users in the United States can choose a "legacy contact" to make one last post on your behalf when you die. That contact can respond to new friend requests, update the cover photo and profile, and archive your Facebook posts and photos.
Until now, when family or friends notified Facebook that a user had died, Facebook verified the death and "memorialized" the account, meaning the account could be viewed but it could not be edited or managed, Facebook product manager Vanessa Callison-Burch said.
Facebook has fielded "hundreds of thousands" of requests since the social media site began memorializing pages in 2007, Jodi Seth, a spokeswoman for Facebook, said.

"We heard from family members who wanted to post funeral information or download and preserve photos," Callison-Burch said. "We realized there was more we could do."
Families have long grappled with how to dispose of the digital personal effects of a deceased family member. Fewer than a dozen states have laws governing authority over digital assets, according to the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. Virginia in 2013 passed a law that allows parents or guardians to take control of a dead child's online accounts after parents of a dead Virginia teenager couldn't get access to his account.

A Zogby Poll in January found that most adults have some concerns about what happens to their digital presence after they die. The poll of 1,012 adults found that 71% want online communications to remain private unless they gave prior consent, and 43% want their private accounts on online services deleted unless they have given prior consent for someone else to access them.
Facebook's 186 million users in the United States can go into a feature under settings to choose a legacy contact to manage the account, opt to have the account deleted permanently after death or do nothing.

Friends or family can report a death through an electronic form at the online Facebook Help Center. Once Facebook is notified of a death and confirms it, Facebook will add the tagline "Remembering" over the user's name and notify the legacy contact. The legacy contact will not be able to log in as the person who died or view that person's private messages, Callison-Burch said.

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483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
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