ASHRAE
®
Communications Committee

BEST PRACTICES FOR CHAPTER WEBSITES

Getting Started

This document is intended to act as a guideline for the creation and management of ASHRAE Chapter websites. A well-maintained website is a great tool for chapters to make announcements, attract members, share content, maintain historical information, establish a web presence, and much more! While this document establishes some basic standards for chapter websites, each chapter should strive to create a website that is unique for their membership.

Functional websites must have two items: a domain name and a website host. There are many service providers that offer one or both services with varying features and price points. As a best practice, the username and password for these services should be stored in a safe place so that any chapter officer can access. The backup email address assigned to these services should be an alias or email account accessible to any chapter officer, not a personal email address.

Financial Investment and Time Commitment

Creating and maintaining a chapter website requires a financial and time commitment from each chapter. The levels of time and financial commitment depend on what the chapter chooses their website solution to be. This document attempts to outline various options used by chapters.

Domain Name and Registration

The domain name is the homepage URL, or the string of text that comes after www. ASHRAE does not have a policy for a chapter's domain name, but recommends it meets the following criteria:

- The domain name of your chapter website should be specific and identifiable such that it will be a top result when your chapter name is searched via Google or other search engines.
- The actual name, acronym, abbreviation, or common nickname of your chapter should be included in the web address.
- The term "ASHRAE" should be included in the domain name.
- The domain should end in .org

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Chapters should expect to pay between $5-$20 USD annually for domain name registration. To avoid a lapse in service, domain registration should be set to renew automatically.

Website Hosting Options

A website host is the location where your website files are stored. In the past, website editors would need to design a website in a file on their computer and then upload the file to the website host. These days, most website hosts offer a website builder as a part of their service. Depending on the level of service, chapters should expect to pay between $100 - $200 USD or more. Hosting by ASHRAE Society is available free of charge to chapters and regions, with limited support. To inquire about a Society-hosted website, email Communications Committee Staff Liaison Joslyn Ratcliff at jratcliff@ashrae.org.

A chapter may elect to create and maintain their website from a blank slate. But it may be helpful to work from a template. In 2019 the Communications Committee surveyed chapters and found the most popular website hosting platforms to be Wix and WordPress. To that end, the Communications Committee maintains, and makes available to chapters free of charge, the following website templates that chapters may use as a starting point for their website.

- **Wix Template:**
  View format here. To access template for use by your chapter, email Communications Committee Staff Liaison Joslyn Ratcliff at jratcliff@ashrae.org.

- **WordPress Template:**
  View format here. To access template for use by your chapter, email Communications Committee Staff Liaison Joslyn Ratcliff at jratcliff@ashrae.org.

Some of the other website hosting services Chapters use include:

- StarChapter
- Shiftweb
- Wild Apricot
- Square Space
- Weebly
- GoDaddy
- Bluefish
- ASHRAE Society Hosting

Some chapters elect to outsource the website design and ongoing maintenance to a 3rd party company.

ASHRAE Society Hosting:

ASHRAE Society supports limited website hosting at no cost to chapters, however, most chapters choose other more robust solutions with cost associated. This is because ASHRAE does not provide hosting that supports database-driven sites such as WordPress, Joomla, Wix, or other third-party solutions. ASHRAE-hosted sites are only provided with a subdomain for their chapter to use following the format ASHRAEChapter.ashraechapters.org, but a domain name such as ASHRAEChapter.org, is not provided. Chapters that choose ASHRAE's hosting are provided with server space and FTP access.

Suggestions for Chapter Website Content

Pages & Headings

A Chapter Website should include the following pages with the appropriate information.
HELPFUL TIP: Check out the current year's PAOE Newsletter to be sure your chapter's website is earning points for website content!

Homepage

- Chapter logo –Your chapter's logo should be already loaded within the Docs and Files section of your Chapter's Basecamp. Guidance on chapter logos, including where to obtain and approved chapter logo, is available online here. If you need Society to resize or help you with your logo, they are more than happy to do so, simply email mailto:logoinformation@ashrae.org.
- Welcome message from President
- Link to the latest newsletter
- Social media links to your chapter's social media presences (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Board of Governors and Volunteers

- Contact information for all positions
- Open volunteer positions
- Include Term Year (i.e. 2022-2023)

Calendar / Upcoming Events

- Event Type/Host
    - Society
    - Regional
    - Chapter

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- Date, time, location, cost, speaker, topic, etc.

Student Activities (SA)

Membership Promotion (MP)

Young Engineers in ASHRAE (YEA)

Women in ASHRAE (WiA)

Research Promotion (RP)

- Include donation button

Chapter Technology Transfer

Grassroots Government Activities (GGA)

Historical Committee

- Past awards
- Pictures from past events
- Past Presidents
- BOG meeting minutes
- Past newsletters
- Awards
- Upcoming nomination deadlines

Career Advertisements / Job Opportunities

- Opportunity for sponsorships

ASHRAE Disclaimer

- "This website is maintained by the XXX Chapter of ASHRAE. ASHRAE chapters do not represent the official positions of ASHRAE Society nor reflect ASHRAE Society's policy. To learn more about the ASHRAE activities on a Society level, please visit the ASHRAE home page at http://www.ashrae.org."[i]

Website Maintenance Checklists

Annual Maintenance

It is anticipated that annual maintenance of a chapter website should take 4-8 hours for one person each year.

- ☐ Update the name and contact information for all chapter board members and volunteer positions.
- ☐ Google your chapter website and confirm it shows up at the top of the results.

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- ☐ Update information for the calendar year. Updates may include:
  - ▪ Annual chapter events (Research promotion fundraisers, Holiday parties, etc.)
  - ▪ Chapter meetings
  - ▪ Save-the-dates for upcoming chapter meetings/events
  - ▪ Award nomination deadlines
  - ▪ CRC (Chapter Regional Conference) event dates & location
  - ▪ ASHRAE Society Winter Meeting dates and location
  - ▪ ASHRAE Society Annual Meeting dates and location
- ☐ Review Social Media links and update if necessary.
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter President for an updated Welcome Message.
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter Treasurer and communicate any financial website needs (i.e. website hosting fees).

Monthly Maintenance

It is anticipated that monthly maintenance of a chapter website should take 2-4 hours for one person each month.

- ☐ Check in with the Chapter Historian for any pictures from recent events or awards that can be added to the website.
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter Programs Chair for updated information related to Chapter events & appropriate registration information.
- ☐ Check in with the following Chapter Chairs for upcoming events and information to be posted/updated on website.
  - ▪ YEA
  - ▪ WIA
  - ▪ Student Activities
  - ▪ Research Promotion
  - ▪ Membership Promotion
  - ▪ Grassroots Government Affairs
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter President for any specific announcements that should be posted on the website.
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter Secretary for BOG Meeting Minutes that should be archived on the website.
- ☐ Check in with the Chapter Technology Transfer Chair for updated newsletters or other information that should be posted on the website.

Other resources from ASHRAE's Communications Committee

- ▪ Best Practices for Social Media

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- ▪ [Best Practices for Email](#)
- ▪ [Electronic Tools Used by Chapters](#)
- ▪ [Office Hours – Get your questions answered by a real-live person!](#)

Other resources from Society

- [ASHRAE Marketing Central](#) has lots of great information and materials to use for your chapter and chapter website.
- Website content can be hard to find. An insider tip is to [sign up for newsletters from Society](#) to get great information to share on your chapter website. Chapter Notes is sent monthly and contains great share-able information for your website.

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[i] 1.[201.010 ASHRAE Policy and Procedure for Format, Activity, and Content of Web Sites for ASHRAE Groups](#)

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