

BEST PRACTICES FOR CHAPTER WEBSITES

Getting Started

This document is intended to act as a guideline for the creation & management of websites for ASHRAE Chapters. 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. ASHRAE does not provide hosting that supports database-driven sites such as WordPress, Joomla, Wix, or other third-party solutions. ASHRAE-hosted sites are 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.

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.
- 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.

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 the following website templates that Chapters may use as a starting point for their website.

- **Wix Template: Available Now!**
View format [here](#). To access template for use by your chapter, email Communications Committee Staff Liaison Joslyn Ratcliff at jratcliff@ashrae.org.
- **Word Press Template:** Available January 2021

Some of the other website hosting services Chapters use include:

- [StarChapter](#)
- [Dreamweaver](#)
- [Joomla!](#)
- [Wild Apricot](#)
- [Square Space](#)
- [Weebly](#)
- [GoDaddy](#)
- [Bluefish](#)

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

Website Pages & Headings

A Chapter Website should include the following pages with the appropriate information.

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Homepage

- Chapter logo – Guidance on Chapter logos, including where to obtain and approved chapter logo, is available online [here](#).
- Welcome message from President
- Link to the latest newsletter
- Social media links

Board of Governors and Volunteers

- Contact information for all positions
- Open volunteer positions
- Include Term Year (i.e. 2019-2020)

Calendar / Upcoming Events

- Event Type/Host
 - Society
 - Regional
 - Chapter
- 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

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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>.”

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.
- 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 & location
 - ASHRAE Society Annual Meeting dates & 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 Historian for any pictures from recent events or award announcements that should be posted to the website.
- 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 that can be added to the website.

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- 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

- [Best Practices for Social Media](#)
- [Best Practices for Email](#)
- [Electronic Tools Used by Chapters](#)
- [ASHRAE Helpful Hints](#)

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