

# Deadline Approaches For Users Of Beijing-Based Microblogs To Register With Their State-Issued IDs

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China's major Beijing-based microblogging service providers will institute real name identification systems by March 16, 2012. This will require users to register with the service providers by such date with their state-issued IDs. Users who do not register by March 16, 2012 will still be able to login to their accounts, but will only be permitted to browse postings on the sites and not transmit messages.

Chinese officials first proposed real name identification for microblogs late last year, leaving it up to different cities to craft their own policies. On December 16, the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, the Beijing Communications Administration and the Beijing Internet Information Office and the Beijing Municipal Information Office jointly issued "Beijing Microblog Development and Management Regulations," (the "Rules"), which became effective on the same date.

In addition to requiring users of microblogging services to register their real names with microblogging service providers, the 16-point Rules:

- Require that before applying for a telecommunications business operating license or going through the filing procedure for a non-business Internet information service, a microblogging service that a website launches is to submit an application to the department in charge of the Internet information content and go through an examination and approval process.
- Require microblogging service providers to ensure the identities of their users within three months (i.e. by March 16).
- Prohibit the unlawful use of microblogs to make, duplicate, issue, or propagate information that contains content falling into eleven prohibited categories, including information that leaks state secrets or damages national unity, information that incites ethnic hatred, information that undermines social stability, and other information otherwise prohibited by law or regulation.

The Rules are applicable to Beijing-based microblogging service providers and their users. Three of China's biggest microblogging services (namely, Sina, Sohu and Netease) are based in Beijing, whereas Tencent (a major web portal company with microblogging services) is based in Shenzhen. It has been reported that after Beijing's initiative, several other cities, including Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, have moved to adopt similar measures.

It is estimated that China currently has more than 300 million registered microbloggers, and a total Internet user population exceeding 500 million.

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