

AQUA Website

Page Creation Policy: Standards and Guidelines for Web

Version: 1.0 | Applies to: All Valley Water Editors | Last Updated: 2026

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document establishes standards that Valley Water staff are recommended to follow when creating or editing pages on Valley Water pages. Its goal is to ensure that every page is clear, accessible, and consistent for all users, regardless of their technical background or ability.

This policy applies to anyone who has been granted web editor access to Valley Water, including IT and Staff.

Why does this matter?

Poorly formatted pages can confuse readers, break accessibility tools like screen readers, and cause compliance issues under federal accessibility standards (WCAG). Following this policy helps everyone on the team and protects Valley Water from accessibility violations.

2. BEFORE YOU CREATE A PAGE

Before creating a new page, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Does this page already exist?** Does this page already exist?
- **Does this page already exist?** Search Aqua first. Adding duplicate pages creates confusion.
- **Is this a new page or an edit?** If the content already exists on a page, edit that page rather than creating a new one.
- **Do you have the content ready?** Avoid creating placeholder or empty pages. Pages should be completed before publishing.

3. COMMON ISSUES TO AVOID

The following are the most common problems found on Valley Water pages.

Common Issue to Avoid
Copying and pasting text directly from Word or Outlook

Common Issue to Avoid
Using ALL CAPS or large bold text instead of proper headings
Uploading images without adding alt text
Adding links that say, "click here" or "read more."
Not underlining links, making them look like regular text
Using the spacebar or Enter key to create visual spacing
Leaving broken links to old pages or removed documents
Writing vague or duplicate page titles and headings
Pasting raw HTML that conflicts with existing site styles
Using inline styles that override the site's CSS
Interactive elements (links/buttons) too small to click (WCAG 2.5.8)
Accessible name mismatches on links (aria-label issues)
Using tables for layout instead of actual data

4. WRITING AND FORMATTING STANDARDS

4.1 Page Titles and Headings

Every page must have a clear, descriptive title that tells the reader what the page is about. Avoid vague or generic titles.

Bad Example:

Safety Information

Good Example:

Water Safety Information for Field Operations Staff

Use the heading styles provided in the editor (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) to organize your content. Do not simulate headings by making text bold or large; this breaks the page structure for screen reader users.

4.2 Links

All links must meet the following requirements:

- **Descriptive text:** The link text should clearly describe where the link goes. Never use "click here," "read more," or the raw URL as the visible text.

- **Underlined:** Links must be underlined so they are visually distinct from surrounding text. Use CTRL + U in the editor to apply underlining.
- **Working:** Always verify that your links are not broken before saving the page.

4.3 Images

All images conveying information should include alternative text (alt text). Alt text provides a brief description that screen readers read aloud to visually impaired users.

- To add alt text, click the eye icon on the image in the editor and enter a description of what the image shows.
- **Good alt text example:** "Map showing Valley Water's service area boundaries in Santa Clara County."
- **Bad alt text example:** "image" or "map."

4.4 Text Formatting

- Do not copy and paste directly from Word, Outlook, or other programs. This can introduce hidden formatting to the page, causing layout problems. Instead, paste as plain text first (Ctrl + Shift + V), then apply formatting using the editor tools.
- Do not use the spacebar or Enter key to create visual spacing between sections. Use the editor's built-in spacing tools or heading styles.
- Do not use ALL CAPS for emphasis. Use bold text or a proper heading style instead.

5. ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Valley Water pages aim to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA. The following are the most common issues and how to resolve them.

5.1 Minimum Target Size

Interactive elements such as links and buttons must have a clickable area of at least 24×24 pixels or have enough surrounding space that they do not overlap neighboring elements. Siteimprove will flag this as: "Interactive element does not meet minimum size nor spacing."

Base Fix (used on most pages)

Add the following style block at the very top of the page's HTML source in CKEditor:

```
<style type="text/css">
  ul li a:not(:has(img)), ol li a:not(:has(img)), table td p a:not(:has(img)), p
a:not(:has(img))
  {
    display: inline-block; padding: 5px 0; min-height: 24px;
  }
</style>
```

Common Page Structures and Selectors

For pages that use a specific layout, target only the relevant selector from the table below:

Page Structure	Selector
Lists only (ul/ol)	<code>ul li a, ol li a</code>
Paragraph links only	<code>p a</code>
Links in table cells	<code>table td p a</code>
divTableCell div layout	<code>.divTableCell ul li a</code>
Mixed or complex pages	Use the base fix above

5.2 Accessible Name Mismatch

The text a screen reader announces for a link must match the visible label on screen. If they differ, speech-input users may be unable to activate the link.

Example Fix

```
<a aria-label="View the Annual Report" href="annual-report">View the Annual Report</a>
```

5.3 Links Not Visually Identifiable

Links must be underlined so users can identify them without relying solely on color.

Fix

Highlight the link text in the editor and press Ctrl + U to apply underlining. Then save the page.

6. BEFORE YOU PUBLISH — CHECKLIST

Run through this checklist before saving or publishing any page on the intranet.

✓	Before You Publish — Checklist
☐	My page title is descriptive and unique — not vague or duplicated.
☐	I used proper heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2) — not bold or ALL CAPS text.

✓	Before You Publish — Checklist
☐	All links have descriptive text — no "click here" or "read more."
☐	All links are underlined and have been tested to confirm their work.
☐	All images have alt text that describes their content.
☐	I did not paste text directly from Word or Outlook.
☐	I did not use the spacebar or Enter key to create spacing.
☐	The page has no outdated information, and the content is ready to publish.