Social Media in Emergency Management

Alex Ambrosius, RIEMA External Affairs
Purpose

• To provide participants with an understanding of social media and its uses, current tools, methods, and models

• To properly leverage social media for crisis communication within their perspective organizations
Agenda - Module 1

• Module 1: Understanding Social Media (SM)

  1. What is SM
  2. Objectives of SM
  3. Traditional Media vs. SM
  4. Challenges of SM
  5. Choose the Right Platform to Match Objectives
  6. Community Outreach
Agenda - Module 2

- Module 2: Adopting Social Media For Your Organization

  1. Develop SM Policies
  2. Increasing Effectiveness
  3. Messaging
  4. Monitoring
  5. Learn to Deal With Trolls
  6. Building Credibility
Module 1: Understanding Social Media
What is Social Media?

• “An innovative way of socializing where we engage in an open dialogue, tell our stories, and interact with one another using online platforms” – Associated Press

• SM allows users to share information and create online communities through the integration of technology, social interaction, text, picture, video, and audio
Objectives of Social Media

• Gets a message out faster/instantly
• Reaches more people via mobile communications devices
• Instant, highly scalable form of communication
• Relatively low operating costs
• Direct from the source
Traditional Media Vs. Social Media

**Traditional Media**
- One-way communication system
- Only TV & radio provides real-time info
- Info controlled by media/press
- Closed system

**Social Media**
- Two-way communication system
- Provides real-time info
- Info can be updated instantly by anyone
- Open system
Challenges of Social Media

• Privacy Issues
  – Organizations may be faced with the challenge of posting sensitive information

• Internal Policy
  – Policies should outline how SM will be used within your organization

• Training
  – Staff assigned to SM need to be properly trained

• Organizational Culture
  – May need to shift organizational makeup of your public relations personnel
Challenges of Social Media

• Who Will Use SM?
  – Dedicate staff solely to work on SM?
  – Assign SM as an additional duty?
  – How many people will have access?

• What SM outlets will your organization use?

• How will SM support your strategic messaging?
Choose the Right Platform to Match Objectives
Community Outreach

• SM can be utilized to portray your organization’s community outreach initiatives
  – Meeting with external partners
  – Speaking at an event
  – Attending/working a conference
  – Trainings & exercises
Module 2: Adopting Social Media For Your Organization
Develop Social Media Policies

- Policies should address the following:
  - Use of SM
  - Types of SM your organization uses
  - Proper vs. improper conduct
  - Processes
Increasing Effectiveness

• Utilize #’s!!!
  – Improve the ability for organizations to categorize messages and to monitor more efficiently

• Prepare canned responses and posts for different types of crisis situations
  – Beneficial for emergency managers to manage during an emergency

• Utilize messaging and monitoring
Messaging

• Keep messages brief
• Include links and/or pictures
• Support a unified message
  – Work with others to help deliver an effective message to the public
  – The more partners involved, the bigger audience you’ll reach
• One voice, multiple channels
  – Coordinate through single POC to speak with same voice and message throughout all channels
• Plan ahead
Monitoring

• Emergency managers can play an interactive SM monitoring role to capture situational awareness
• If your organization plans on using SM solely for broadcasting information, post a disclaimer that states you do not actively monitor to help manage public expectations
• Useful monitoring sites:
  – Twitter
  – Tweetdeck
Learn to Deal With Trolls

• Be prepared to put up with some negativity
• Distinguish between trolls and those frustrated due to event-related circumstances
  – Trolls try to disrupt, destroy, or change information to fit their own agenda
  – Trolls are typically repeat offenders
• Don’t engage!
• Don’t get discouraged!
Learn to Deal With Trolls

• Difference between trolling and life-threatening
• Address reporting threats in your policy
Building Credibility

• Build a reputation
  – Be a useful source of information
  – Be professional

• Create a presence
  – Establish a following BEFORE an emergency
  – Post often
  – Find a balance

• Stay involved and current with information
  – People want to know what’s happening NOW
Contact Me!

• Alex Ambrosius
  – Phone: (401) 462-7337
  – Email: alexander.ambrosius@ema.ri.gov
  – Twitter: @RhodeIslandEMA
  – Facebook: facebook.com/rhodeislandema
  – Web: riema.ri.gov
Questions?

Twitter: @RhodeIslandEMA
Facebook: facebook.com/rhodeislandema
Web: riema.ri.gov