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Guidelines for the use of new media by public and private organisations

Author(s):   Ira Helsloot, Astrid Scholtens, Jelle Groenendaal, Nivine Melssen (Crisislab), Hayley Watson, Kim Hagen and Kush Wadhwa (Trilateral Research and Consulting), Eirini Kalemaki, Alex Papadimitriou, Apostolos Vontas (Hellenic Rescue Team)
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Guidelines for the use of new media by public and private organisations before, during and after crises

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Handbook for the use of new media by public and private organisations before, during and after crises

IRA HELSLOOT, ASTRID SCHOLTENS, JELLE GROENENDAAL, NIVINE MELSSEN, HAYLEY WATSON, KIM HAGEN, KUSH WADHWA, EIRINI KALEMAKI, ALEX PAPADIMITRIOU & APOSTOLOS VONTAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides guidelines for public and private organisations regarding the use of social media in crisis situations. The aim of these guidelines are to advance social media usage by both citizens and organisations during crises in order to improve crisis management activities and, to also enhance the safety and security of citizens. Within this document, a distinction is made between guidelines for public and private organisations. This has been done because public and private organizations may have different tasks, responsibilities and stakes during a crisis situation. In addition, the guidelines are divided into five different categories. 1) Promotion of new media before crisis situations. 2) Communicating with citizens via new media during crises. 3) Communicating with citizens via new media after crises 4) Using information from new media in crisis management activities. 5) Implications for the organisation of crisis management activities.

Guidelines for public organisations

	GUIDELINES
A. Promotion of new media before crisis situations	1 Operate where your audience is
	2 Do not forget to utilise old and new communication technologies.
	3 Advertise!
	4 Be careful with using participatory actions to increase follower engagement
	5 Encourage people to use social media when crises occur
	6 State clearly that the public has the right to record and share content about the crisis situation at hand
	7 Inform citizens via new media about the risks they face.
	8 Be aware that social media cannot and should not replace other crisis warning systems
	9 Facilitate education and training in social media usage.
	10 Promote the widespread use of tools that can help individuals counter surveillance and bypass censorship.
B. Communicating with citizens via new media during crises	1 Communicate with honesty, candour and openness on social media.
	2 Act upon the concerns of citizens via social media.
	3 Do not wait until all information is known before responding to public concerns.
	4 Ask users of social media to gather information for you.
	5 Use social media to encourage users to inform and help others
	6 In the case of twitter, followers can be asked to re-tweet your tweets
	7 Add value!
	8 Cooperate with emergent initiatives on social media during crises.
	9 Encourage citizens to use existing initiatives
	10 Use crowdsourcing applications
C. Communicating	1 Use social media to encourage people to take care of each other.
	2 Seek feedback from those you communicated with during a crisis situation

with citizens via new media after crises	3 Maintain communication through your social media accounts.
D. Using information from new media in crisis management activities	1 Be aware of using information from one source or without evidence.
	2 Thank citizens for providing information via social media.
	3 Make it possible to share pictures and videos taken from new media sources among first responders at the scene of the event.
E. Implications for the organisation of crisis management activities	1 Develop a new media policy for all members of the organization
	2 Develop a guideline for citizen journalists and first responders.
	3 Decentralise decision-making authority to the professional responders at the scene of the event.
	4 Prepare a set of standard messages
	5 Appoint social media watchers and communicators
	6 Practice the relation between internal and external communication processes
	7 Think about who communicates what and when during crises.

Guidelines for private organisations

	GUIDELINES
A. Promotion of new media before crisis situations	1 Use popular social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Google+) to increase citizens' involvement with your organisation.
	2 Adjust your use of social media applications to your target audience;
	3 Be consistent in your use of social media applications.
	4 Promote your social media accounts;
	5 Agree upon unique, compact, and simple Twitter-hashtags prior to major events.
	6 Use canonical symbols and icons when issuing disaster warnings.
	7 Use specific new media applications to prepare for plausible crisis situations.
B. Communicating with citizens via new media during crises	1 Use your pre-existing social media accounts to communicate crisis management information to your network.
	2 Respond to victims' request for communication through social media.
	3 Cooperate with the public sector's channels of crisis communication
	4 Use canonical Twitter-hashtags for specific crisis situations rather than creating your own.
	5 Use canonical Twitter-hashtags for specific crisis situations rather than creating your own.
C. Communicating with citizens via new media after crises	1 Seek feedback from, and provide feedback to, those you communicated with during a crisis situation.
	2 Maintain communication through your social media accounts.
D. Using information from new media in crisis management activities	1 Monitor the information posted on your social media accounts on a regular basis
	2 Interact with the sources of information
	3 Crosscheck the information you receive through social media.
	4 Ensure that the information you share through social media is relevant both for your target audience and the social media platform.
E. Implications for the organisation of	1 Develop a strategy on the use of new media applications before, during, and after a crisis.
	2 Do not rely on social media alone.

| crisis management activities | 3 Establish collaboration and communication channels with public authorities before a crisis. |
| | 4 Train and support staff to effectively use social media. |

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1. INTRODUCTION

Citizens increasingly use social media in day-to-day situations as well as, during crisis situations. Research and practice illustrate that social media provide new opportunities and challenges for public and private organisations concerned with risk and crisis communication. As time progresses evidence shows that, if properly used, social media can be a powerful tool to enhance the safety and security of the public. The term 'social media' refers to web-enabled applications that are built around user-generated or use-manipulated content, such as Twitter, blogs, wikis and social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn.

This handbook provides guidelines for public and private organisations about the use of social media in crisis situations. The aim of these guidelines is to advance social media usage by citizens and organisations during crises, in order to improve crisis management activities and, enhance the safety and security of citizens. By 'organisations' we mean those groups that regularly carry out tasks within crisis management (e.g., emergency services, Red Cross, etc.) as well as those that are not usually involved in crisis management, but who may intentionally or unintentionally play a role in it (for instance hotels providing sheltering or supermarkets providing). This handbook is targeted towards policy advisors, communication practitioners, crisis managers and senior executives.

Public and private organisations may have different organisational goals and values before and during crises. As such, within this handbook we distinguish between guidelines for public and private organisations. For each group, the handbook in split into four sections:
  a) social media promotion before crises;
  b) communication via social media during crises;
  c) communication via social media after crises;
  d) using information from social media within crisis management activities; and
  e) implications for the organisation of crisis management activities.

The first section of the handbook aims to assist organisations to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public participation in social media before (risk communication) and during crises (crisis communication). The underlying assumption is that risk and crisis management activities by organisations can be further improved when more citizens engage with social media and, accordingly used effectively for broadcasting messages. The remaining sections aim to assist organisations in enhancing their effective use of social media. Social media may provide a rich and rapid information base that can be used by organisations for improving internal crisis management processes. By doing so, these sub-section intend to further increase the utility between the information provided by citizens and organisations and the actions undertaken by those who are involved in crisis management activities. By providing good practices of how new media have been used in the past, this handbook should contribute to informing organisations of the information citizens are providing, as well as, methods for

dealing with this information during crises. Furthermore, in order to be adequately prepared for optimal social media use during a crisis, this handbook also provides an insight and recommendations on how to respond to some of the challenges posed by the use of social media in a crisis.

2. GUIDELINES FOR NEW MEDIA PROMOTION AND USAGE BY PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS AIMED AT INCREASING CITIZENS' SECURITY

Citizens increasingly use social media before and during crises, which provides new opportunities and challenges for increasing citizen's security before and during crises. Consequently, public organisations need to think about how they can promote the use of these tools and understand how they can be used in order to improve their performance during and after crises.

Target audience:
- Public organisations that regularly carry out tasks in crisis management (e.g., Fire and Rescue services, Police etc.)
- Public organisations that are not usually involved in crisis management but that can play a role in it (e.g. public transport services, water authorities, etc.).

A. Guidelines for social media promotion and usage by public organisations aimed at increasing citizen's security before crises

1 Operate where your audience is
Use popular social media applications to increase citizens' involvement with your organisation. The more popular and accessible a social media application is, the more likely it is to be used.

Key step:
- o Research and verify what social media applications are most popular in your country.

  - Example: Use of social media in the UK. A simple Google search using the term "UK social media usage" provides the most recent information on the use of social networking sites in the UK.

2 Do not forget to utilise old and new communication technologies.
Keep in mind that in case of a crisis, your audience will use different communication channels and has to be reached by using both traditional and new media communication channels – interoperability is key. Be mindful that the content of your message will need to be considered with regard to the type of communication you are using; one size does not fit all.

Key step:
- o Design and test a comprehensive risk and crisis communication strategy that highlights the interoperability of different communication systems you are choosing to use to reach your audience.

3 Advertise!

Make use of different communication channels to promote your presence on social media. Many public organisations have the ability to reach their audience via the services they provide to the general public.

Key steps:
o Consider the different ways in which you have or can get in touch with your audience and choose the best to promote your social media accounts.
o Ensure that advertising stimulates citizens to engage on your social media applications.

- Example: Citizens regularly visit their municipality to request new travel documents or a driver licence. These visits can be used by the municipality to promote the municipality's Twitter channel or Facebook page.

Example: The Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (UK) uses their fire trucks to promote their Twitter channel.

4 Be careful with using participatory actions to increase follower engagement.

Especially on Twitter, public organisations activities aimed at follower engagement may be vulnerable to "trolling". That is, social media users who are posting off-topic messages.

Key steps:
o Share positive examples, in order to keep and to gain a positive flow of your messages.
o Monitor your brand on Twitter and intervene only when you think it will attract positive follower attention.

Scizyr Saj'Xanin
@Scizyr   Follow

NYPD raping a woman right out in public. Disgusting, hide your kids!
#myNYPD

10:38 PM - 22 Apr 2014

Example (from New York Magazine): "The official @NYPDnews Twitter account made an attempt at social media outreach only to get promptly torn to shreds by users resisting the PR push. Hijacked hashtags are a common Twitter phenomenon, but tend to be played more for giggles ("trolling" some call it) than to make a coherent political statement. With #myNYPD, however, a harsh pattern emerged right away. It's safe to say none of these will be making the Facebook page."

5 Encourage people to use social media when crises occur.
Use different communication channels to make it explicit that citizens can help public and private organisations through sharing content on social media.

Key steps:
o Share Tweets and Facebook posts in which followers are encouraged to share pictures and factual information about emergencies.
o State explicitly what will be done with this information and how long it takes before the information will be used by emergency responders.
o Make clear that in case of an emergency, social media applications will/will not replace/supplement the emergency number.

6 State clearly that the public has the right to record and share content about the crisis situation at hand
This includes content about emergency responders working within the public view. So this means that citizens can share actions of emergency responders whom are on site.

Key step:
o Communicate explicitly to citizens that they are allowed to take pictures and share information about the emergency.
o State that making pictures and sharing information should not interfere with the on-site emergency work.
o Make explicit what will be done with the information from citizens.
o Develop a data protection policy in which is stated what will be done with information provided by citizens. How long will it stored? To whom is it accessable? Etc.

7 Inform citizens via new media about the risks they face.

Citizens only prepare for those crises that they perceive to present a significant and imminent threat to themselves or their relatives; in the absence of danger, individuals do not like to think about any possible negative consequences of a crisis situation. New media applications can be used to inform people about specific risks in their local environment.

Key step:
o Develop a (smartphone) application that citizens can use in case of crises or you can use to warn a specific target group who faces a threat.
o Promote the use of this application through social media etc.
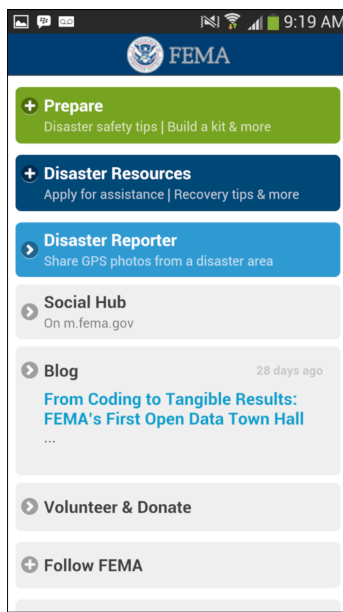
Example: The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has created a smartphone application for public use. The goal is to educate, notify and distribute and collect information to citizens across all U.S. States and territories.[1]

8 Be aware that social media cannot and should not replace other crisis warning systems.

Use social media complementary to other crisis warning systems. Keep in mind social media applications usually require mobile phones with Internet network access. During crises, digital communication networks may break down which make it impossible to use social media applications for those who are involved in the crisis situation.

Key step:
o Consider if citizens should been able to warn authorities via social media applications.
o If not, make explicitly clear that citizens should use traditional warning methods to alarm the emergency services.

9 Facilitate education and training in social media usage.

In order to increase awareness of threats (e.g. incorrect information or violating privacy of individuals) created by sharing information in online networks and awareness of methods that

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[1] http://emergencysafety.blogspot.ca/2014/05/fema-smart-phone-app-review-part-i.html

can be used to protect the privacy and physical safety of individuals, stimulate the provision of social media education and training.

Key step:
o Create and promote a list of do's and don'ts in social media usage during crises, make sure that this short list can be easily shared and distributed through social media.
o Make an online list of social media training suppliers.
o Consider if the possibilities to make social media training part of education.

10 Promote the widespread use of tools that can help individuals counter surveillance and bypass censorship.
This can be achieved by standardizing and simplifying such tools for the general public.

Key step:
o Identify tools which can be used by citizens to share information freely and if needed anonymously.
o Define what kind of information needs confirmation and or multiple sources in order to be useful and share this through the tools and other social media.
o Make sure that there is a free platform where citizens can (if needed anonymously) share information.
o State clearly that information shared through this platform is not confirmed but shared by citizens for citizens.

Example: forums and blogs are widely used, not only in time of crises but especially in times of crises.

B. Guidelines for communicating with citizens via new media during crises

1 Communicate with honesty, candour and openness on social media.
Communication via social media should be deliberate in sharing available crisis information in a timely and accurate manner. Crises create a huge need for immediate, up-to-date information; providing information may ease uncertainty and supports citizens to behave in a well-informed self-reliant manner.

Key steps:
o Share what you know and what you don't know.
o Share information as soon as possible.
o Share information as factual as possible.
o Provide pictures and links if possible.

2 Act upon the concerns of citizens via social media.
Use social media to respond to public concerns. Respond to citizens' concerns of risk and uncertainty, regardless of whether the perceived risk is manifested. By dialoguing, rumours can be extinguished timely.

Key steps:
o Respond quickly to questions from citizens.
o Create an online frequent asked question list and keep this as up to date as possible.
o Be as transparent as possible in what you know and don't know.

3 Do not wait until all information is known before responding to public concerns.
Accept uncertainty and ambiguity and don't be afraid to inform citizens that you don't know something but effort will be devoted to find out. Be transparent!

Example: On May 2012, a 30-year old male threatened to cause a massacre in the Rotterdam Zuidplein Mall. The threat led to a stream of messages on Twitter, while the defendant himself did not use that application. Some Twitter users posted an old picture of police vehicles in front of the shopping mall. Other Twitter users suggested a terrorist attack was taking place. A number of shops in the mall closed their doors for precautionary reasons. The Twitter messages were also picked up by regional and national news media. The regional television station RTV Rijnmond even dispatched a live-broadcast vehicle to the scene of the event. This example shows that rumours can easily be considered truthful. Response and counter information can reduce the influence of rumours.

Key steps:
o Monitor constantly what people are saying about your brand on social media.
o Act upon concerns from citizens by stating what can be verified and what not.

4 Ask users of social media to gather information for you.
Ask social media users explicitly to gather crisis-relevant information that could be used in the crisis response. For instance, in the case of a large-scale collapse, ask users to take pictures of the disaster site. Or, ask people to check information provided by other social media users or first responders at the scene of the event.

Key steps:

o   Ask citizens to gather information and pictures about the crisis.
o   State explicitly that under no circumstances citizens should put themselves in danger.
o   State which information is needed and how it should be shared.

5 Use social media to encourage users to inform and help others.

Many citizens are willing to help others during crises, but do not know how they may help. Social media applications can be used to encourage users to assist fellow citizens. For instance, via social media users can be requested to inform the neighbours about a possible threat or to take care of each other and especially less reliant citizens.

Key steps:
o   Define different kinds of help that could be provided.
o   Make clear what citizens can do and what they are not supposed to do.
o   Show citizens where there is or may be a need for help.
o   Ask followers to encourage others to help each other.

> Example: people who might be able to help with discarding fallen trees need other "skills" than someone who can help out transporting a neighbour to a shelter. It is important to provide options and state what help is needed where.

6 In the case of twitter, followers can be asked to re-tweet your tweets.

Especially when the information is important for a broader audience. Tell followers that those who face the greatest risks during crises are often those with the least access to information.

Key step:
o   Ask the public explicitly to retweet information
o   Ask the public explicitly to share the information trough other channels if they can.
o   Explain the importance of the information getting to the least informed
o   Provide if possible examples of whom this might be

> Attention point: Social isolation is a key risk-factor for citizens during crises. This was also the case during the 2013 Heatwaves in the UK. Older people, in particular, need to rely upon their social networks to ensure good health during heatwaves.[2] Keep in mind that over-reliance on social media versus traditional communication methods may increase social isolation for those who do not use new technologies, and could adversely affect the most vulnerable during this type of crisis.

7 Add value!

When using Twitter, be aware that tweets with links, unique content and hash tags are often retweeted more often. So when communicating through Twitter, use pictures, a hash tag or a link to accompany your message with.

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[2] Cadot, Emmanuelle, Victor G. Rodwin, and Alfred Spira, "In the Heat of the Summer Lessons from the Heat Waves in Paris", *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, Vol. 84, No. 4,2007, pp. 466-8.

Key step:
- o Add if possible to every message an hash tag, picture of direct link
- o Make sure your hash tag is general but directed at the crises, so that your hash tag can also be used by other organisations.
- o Ask people continuously to retweet your information
- o Direct people to information site where they can get up to date information and keep sharing this information

8 Cooperate with emergent initiatives on social media during crises.

When disaster strikes, citizens and organisations will undertake immediate action and set up initiatives to help others, also on social media. When a certain hash tag is commonly used during a crisis situation, make use of it.

Key steps:
- o Check if there are hash tags which are already in use.
- o Support emergent initiatives on social media. For instance, make promotion for emergent initiatives that are helpful for citizens and support these initiatives with resources.
- o Stay in contact with citizens who are already tweeting (or blogging etc.) about the crisis and have a great outreach to the public to share information.

9 Encourage citizens to use existing initiatives.

E.g. as Google's Person Finder (an application which helps people reconnect with friends and loved ones in the aftermath of crises) instead of using a different application.

Key step:
- o Promote the use of social media applications which are already widely used during the crisis situation trough, among others, social media

C. Guidelines for communicating with citizens after a crisis via new media

1 Use social media to encourage people to take care of each other. Crises could have a severe impact on the psychosocial well being of citizens. Social media applications can be used to encourage people to take care of each other. By example: to encourage self help groups or story sharing through blogging. In addition, new media applications such as smart phone applications could be developed in which people can do a self-test to see whether they should search for psychosocial trauma care.

Key step:
- o Develop a list of symptoms which can indicate psychological trauma
- o Formulate questions in order to measure if citizens show this symptoms
- o Create an application that people can use to see whether or not they should seek help

- Make sure that people can also use this application in order to identify possible psychological trauma of others
- Provide information about where and how people can seek help if necessary

2 Seek feedback from those you communicated with during a crisis situation. Feedback can help to improve future communication strategies.

Key step:
- Create a questionnaire or ask citizens to respond to post on social media applications to gather opinions about the emergency response.
- Ask if the opinions of citizens may be used in the emergency evaluation process.
- Ask if citizens are willing to cooperate further in the emergency evaluation process.

3 Maintain communication through your social media accounts. Avoid going back to minimal communication via social media if this proved to play an important role during a crisis. Citizens have come to know this as a useful way of receiving information.

Key step:
- Keep sharing information through the channels proven valuable
- Make clear what communication channels will remain used after the crisis is over.

D. Guidelines for using information from new media in crisis management activities

1 Be aware of using information from one source or without evidence.
Check all information for accuracy and respond honestly to questions. If you do not know they answer, it is better to communicate the uncertainty of the situation and explain what you are doing to find out the answer than to answer incorrectly or not answer at all.

Example: During the response to Hurricane Sandy, on Twitter user began posting tweets that claimed to be critical first-hand accounts of the situation on the ground. The tweets were quickly re-tweeted hundreds of times and was eventually covered by mainstream media as factual reports. In such case, other Twitter users can be asked to verify or falsify this

message and requested to post pictures of the scene of the event.

Key step:
- Be transparent about information you have and you don't have
- If you share unconfirmed information, make sure that this is clear to everyone
- Try to verify information as soon as possible

2 Thank citizens for providing information via social media.
By providing positive feedback, ordinary citizens and organisations will be encouraged to keep offering relevant information for other citizens as well as for professional emergency organisations.

Key step:
- explicitly thank people for sharing information
- point out the added value of their sharing
- cheer about all the shared information, during the crises but also in retrospect so that people will act the same way during next crises.

3 Make it possible to share pictures and videos taken from new media sources among first responders at the scene of the event.
Especially for commanders and located distant from the scene of the event, pictures and videos may advance their situational awareness and consequently their decision-making. Therefore, professional emergency responders should be enabled to exchange information from social media rapidly through the command structure. Keep in mind however that it remains always up to those who are at the scene of the event to frame these pictures and videos in a right context.

Key step:
- create an infrastructure in which information from social media applications can be shared with front line responders
- Make explicit how emergency responders should use the information from social media applications; prevent information overload!
- Take into account privacy issues and address these in a privacy policy.

E. **Guidelines for the organization of crisis management activities (e.g. search and rescue, crisis communication, etc.) in an era with social media**

1 Develop a new media policy for all members of the organization. Having policies in place for how organizational members will communicate via social media before and during crisis is important for proper use.

Key steps:
- In policy, define why, when and how social media applications should be used by members of the organization before and during crises.
- State explicitly in the new media policy that uncertainty and ambiguity should be accepted. Waiting until all information is known before responding to a crisis can put citizens and the organization in danger.

- Be explicit about who is allowed to communicate what kind of information. In essence, communication officers may be explicitly allowed to communicate factual information that is already visible for the public or journalists.

2 Develop a guideline for citizen journalists and first responders. Be explicit about how citizen journalists and first responders can help you by using social media applications during crisis situations.

Key steps:
- Create a digital platform on which information is provided for citizen journalists how to act during a crisis situation.
- Do not emphasize what citizens not should do but especially how they can support crisis management activities.

3 Decentralise decision-making authority to the professional responders at the scene of the event. In a flash or fast burning crisis, time is of the essence. By decentralising decision-making to those with direct perceptual access to the scene of the event, decision-making about crisis communication can be speeded up. Citizens can be informed quickly when professional responders at the scene of the event are allowed to communicate factual information immediately to those who are involved.

Key steps:
- Make sure that all first responders know what information they allowed to share with citizens.
- Make explicit that time is of essence when it comes to communication with the general public.

4 Prepare a set of standard messages. While no single incident is exactly the same, every incident consists of similar phases. These phases can be anticipated. Communication messages for social media can be prepared for each phase. For instance, in case of a large-scale structural fire, there will be some deposition of dangerous substances from the smoke. This event can be predicted, as it will recur in every large-scale fire. A communication message could be prepared for which state what people living in downwind areas should do when they find substances in their garden, like fragments from a large explosion.

Key steps:
- Define standard phases for different kind of standard crises
- Formulate standard messages for each phase
- If possible make the messages for the different crisis as uniform as possible

5 **Appoint social media watchers and communicators**. Make people within the organization responsible for analysing social media during crises. In addition, think about who is allowed to respond to posts on social media.

Key steps:
- Appoint people who can watch social media coverage by citizens.
- Monitor trending topics and use the information flow by providing and adding information.

6 **Practice the relation between internal and external communication processes regularly.** Find out how information from the 'outside' can flow effectively to those 'inside' the organization who may benefit from it.

Key steps:
- Discuss with emergency responders what they would like to know when dispatched to or at work at the scene of the event and examine whether this information can be obtained from social media. However, be aware of the danger of information overload. Do not provide emergency responders with too much information derived from social media.
- Examine how information from 'inside' the organization can be communicated in a timely manner to those 'in the outside' who are involved in the crisis response.
- Exercise regularly the communication processes, e.g. by table-top exercises or twitter exercises. Use exercises to improve policies and training.

7 Think about who communicates what and when during crises. Not all information should be communicated directly and or by communication officers. Some kind of information belongs to the communication message of administrators and high public officials such as mayors and elected politicians.

Key step:
- Decide if there is information that needs to be shared through a high public officer, mayor and or elected politician.
- Information that needs to come from high public officer, mayor and or elected politician needs to shared as soon as possible through as many channels as possible in order to gain maximum exposure.

1. GUIDELINES FOR NEW MEDIA PROMOTION AND USAGE BY PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AIMED AT INCREASING CITIZENS' SECURITY

The uninterrupted functioning of new media communication systems is important in everyday life, but becomes even more important in crisis situations: all actors involved in crisis management activities need to be able to exchange information amongst each other, as well as being able to reach citizens to enhance their security and wellbeing. In addition to the role public organisations can play in this, these crisis managers can be private organisations: those that work on crisis management on a daily basis (e.g., Red Cross), but also those usually not involved in crisis management, but that are affected by a crisis or want to assist in its management (e.g., retailers).

It is therefore of foremost importance to develop a strategy for private sector players' use of new media applications before, during, and after a crisis. The guidelines listed below present recommendations for such a strategy. These guidelines target:

> 1) Private or non-governmental organisations that regularly carry out tasks in crisis management (e.g., Red Cross), and
> 2) Private or non-governmental organisations that are not usually involved in crisis management but that can play a role in it (e.g., stores).

A. Guidelines for the promotion of new media before crisis situations

The ways new media are used before a crisis has a great impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of its use during a crisis, and therefore on its ability to have a positive impact on enhancing the safety and security of citizens.

1. **Use popular social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Google+) to increase citizens' involvement with your organisation.** The more popular and accessible a social media application is, the more likely it is to be used. The use of the social media applications in a pre-crisis setting aids its use during crisis situations, as your followers are already familiar with it.

   Key steps:
   o Explore which forms of social media are most popular amongst the people you want to reach. This can vary greatly on a geographic scale. For example, Facebook and Twitter are very popular on a global scale, whereas hi5 is particularly popular in Latin America.
   o Create an account with the social media application that is most popular amongst your target group.
   o Observe how others use the social media application you are using. Ensure that you take a similar approach that fits with the tone of that application.

2. **Adjust your use of social media applications to your target audience**; who uses what varies greatly per demographic group.

   Key steps:

o Look into statistics of social media usage per age group in your country. Twitter, for example, is a suitable means to reach young people in the UK, and could contribute to increasing their safety in a crisis. However, it is less suitable to reach elderly people.
o Create and start using accounts with social media applications that are most popular amongst your target audience.
o Consider the usefulness of interoperability between different accounts to help streamline your use of social media within crisis management. For instance, Twitter accounts can be connected to a Facebook account so that when a Tweet is sent it also appears on Facebook.

3. **Be consistent in your use of social media applications.** For example, if you use Facebook in a pre-crisis situation, your followers will expect you to also use this type of media application when a crisis situation occurs.

Key steps:
o Create and use a specific social media application in an everyday situation.
o Make it clear that you will use this social media account in crisis situations. For instance, ensure that your public website provides audiences with links to your social media accounts as well as information on how it will be used.
o Use this account to provide the public with relevant information when a crisis occurs.

Example: Plano Emergency Management in Texas, USA, uses Facebook to communicate on disaster preparation and response.

Plano Emergency Management shared City of Plano, Texas Government's photo.
15 hours ago

Plano has a notification system called Plano City Call. The system delivers emergency and informational messages specific to a Plano neighborhood automatically on a land line phone. Plano residents may sign up to receive alerts on their cel... See more

Plano Emergency Management
21 April

Severe Thunderstorm Watch until 10 PM

Showers and thunderstorms likely, mainly after 4pm. Some of the storms could be severe. Remain aware of weather conditions and monitor weather alert radio, TV, radio, or wireless alert systems for immediate warning information.

4. **Promote your social media accounts**; the more followers you have the greater the impact you can have.

Key steps:
o Consider where you could gain greater visibility through your social media accounts. For example, as a retail organisation you can link promotional offers to the use of the social media account you use. You can also use one of your more popular social media accounts to promote the use of a specific, less popular, social media application (see the example provided in the box below).
o Ensure your communication is clear, to the point, and easy to understand.

Example: The American Red Cross uses their Facebook page, which has over 605,000 'likes', to promote the use of their Flood App, through which they communicate information on crisis management related to floods.

American Red Cross
30 April

Know what's safe and what's not during flood situations.

More information can be found in our Flood App:
http://www.redcross.org/prepare/mobile-apps/flood

Know flood safety

American Red Cross
Join us. Get prepared.

5. **Agree upon unique, compact, and simple Twitter-hashtags prior to major events.** In collaboration with public sectors players, private sector crisis management officials should consider creating hashtags prior to probable crises. This channels information on Twitter into a traceable stream. It also limits the risk of having to change or add hashtags during crises, and therefore allows tweets to efficiently use most of the 140 characters, rather than using them to include several hashtags.
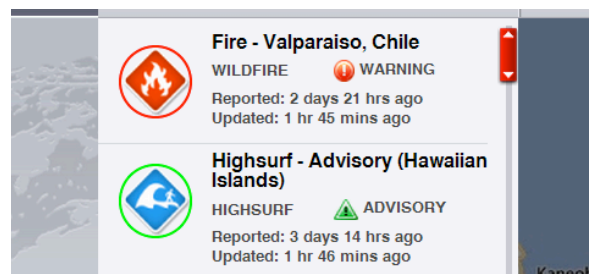
Key steps:
o Plan ahead and start creating hashtags for high probability crises in your area. Consider liaising with authorities to ensure a central hashtag is being used.

6. **Use canonical symbols and icons when issuing disaster warnings.** It must be clear at first sight what kind of potential crisis the warning relates to, so citizens take appropriate action to reduce the risk of a crisis.

Key steps:
o Use unambiguous symbols representing certain crises.
o Start using these symbols in crisis-related communication prior to a crisis to ensure people are familiar with the symbols and their associated meanings.
o When operating in cross-border crises, keep in mind that these symbols can vary between countries.

Example: On their website and app, the Pacific Disaster Center uses the same simple symbols in communicating information on potential crisis situations to increase citizens' security.

Fire - Valparaiso, Chile
WILDFIRE   WARNING
Reported: 2 days 21 hrs ago
Updated: 1 hr 45 mins ago

Highsurf - Advisory (Hawaiian Islands)
HIGHSURF   ADVISORY
Reported: 3 days 14 hrs ago
Updated: 1 hr 46 mins ago
Kaneol

7. **Use specific new media applications to prepare for plausible crisis situations.** Crisis situations related to frequently occurring (natural) hazards allow more scope for preparedness. You can use information on the nature and potential effects of such hazards to increase your own preparedness, and share this information via social media applications to increase citizens' preparedness.

Key steps:
o Consider using new media (including social media) applications that keep you informed on hazards in your area.
o Monitor the hazards, and if the risk of such hazards affecting you increases, take timely precautions.

Example: Wal-Mart used its own hurricane tracking software to track hurricane Katrina. Based on their observations they got emergency supplies, including satellite phones, ready to deal with a crisis situation.
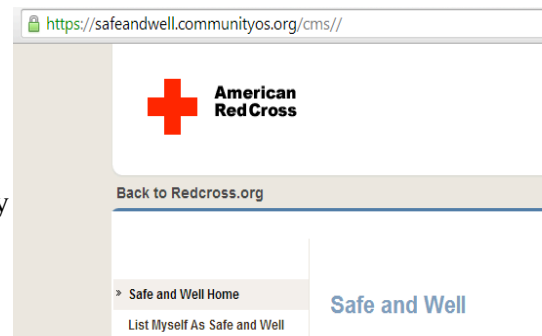
B. Guidelines for communicating via new media during crisis situations

1. **Use your pre-existing social media accounts to communicate crisis management information to your network.** Your network expects you to interact with them via the social media you used prior to the crisis.

Key steps:
o Avoid starting to use new social media during crisis situations, instead, use the accounts you set up in the pre-crisis phase.

Example: During the Boston Marathon Bombings the American Red Cross used Twitter to disseminate information to the public. They also used their 'Safe and Well' website for people in the crisis area to enter information regarding their welfare so family and friends could check their wellbeing. Both Twitter and the website had been established prior to the bombings.

https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms//

American Red Cross

Back to Redcross.org

» Safe and Well Home
List Myself As Safe and Well

Safe and Well

2. **Respond to victims' request for communication through social media.** When traditional communication channels cease to be reliable during crises, there may be an increase in citizens contacting you through your pre-existing social media channels. Be prepared and able to deal with this to enhance the affected citizens' wellbeing.

Key steps:
o Consider training staff on the know-hows of working with social media, especially those who are used to working with traditional media.
o Consider a temporary internal re-organisation (of people and rotas) to be able to respond to an increase in communication via social media.
o Ensure staff access to additional mobile phones, tablets, or computers if needed.

3. **Cooperate with the public sector's channels of crisis communication** to ensure that communication and advice directed at citizens is coordinated and mainstreamed.

Key steps:
o Make sure you stay up to date with information provided by public crisis managers. For example, you can download their apps and/or follow or connect with their social media accounts.
o Exchange information on how you intend to intervene in the crisis to avoid duplication of work and to make sure affected citizens are not overlooked.
o Consider sharing your social media network with public crisis managers to increase the chances that all citizens affected by the crisis are reached. If doing so, make sure you do not breach data protection policies that exist between you and your network.

Example: In the USA, several major wireless carriers, such as T-Mobile, subscribed to the Federal Emergency Management's Wireless Emergency Alerts. In the likelihood of a crisis, text-like messages are sent to mobile phones in the geographic area at risk.

4. Symbols used in crisis communication must clearly relate to the crisis addressed to enhance the clarity of information and increase its uptake.

Key steps:
o Use the same canonical symbols and icons in communicating crisis information as used when issuing warnings.

Example: The Pacific Disaster Center uses the same symbols for warning and actual crises - the difference is indicated by the colour of the circle around it.
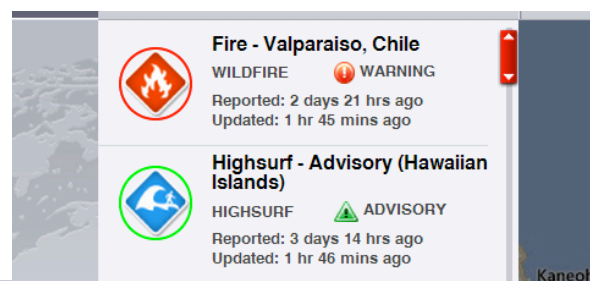
5. Use canonical Twitter-hashtags for specific crisis situations rather than creating your own.

Key steps:
o Identify and determine which hashtags officials use in the crisis so as to ensure continuity in crisis communication.
o Use the same hashtags and promote the use of these hashtags to facilitate information sharing.

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C. Guidelines for communicating with citizens after crisis situations via new media

1. **Seek feedback from, and provide feedback to, those you communicated with during a crisis situation.** Feedback can help to improve future communication strategies. For example, you can report on your website what you did to manage the crisis and can provide readers with the opportunity to provide online comments or create an online form to encourage discussions to occur.

2. **Maintain communication through your social media accounts.** Avoid returning to minimal communication via social media if this proved to play an important role during crisis. Citizens have come to know it as a useful way of receiving information. In the aftermath of the crisis, social media can play an important role in crisis recovery, for example for fundraising purposes.

D. Guidelines for using information from new media in crisis management activities

1. **Monitor the information posted on your social media accounts on a regular basis in order to:**
   o be constantly informed of the crisis situation (areas seriously affected by the disaster, related needs and request for help, etc.)
   o be able to respond to crisis victims requests and offer assistance in due time
   o disseminate the information to relevant authorities and support organisations.

   Key Steps:
   o Create your social media accounts before a crisis situation and develop a strong network of professionals and citizens
   o During the crisis ask your target audience to provide updates about the situation and related needs.

Example: **Partners in Health** (PIH) is an international private organization that used extensively social media during the Haiti earthquake in 2010 to disseminate information to its colleagues. In particular, PIH's Facebook group jumped from 4,000 to nearly 50,000 fans after the earthquake.

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2. Interact with the sources of information in order to:
- o   elicit more or better information for key issues
- o   correct misinformation
- o   ask people who post on your new media accounts to re-share the specific information so as to reach as many people as possible

Key Steps:
- o   Pose questions that will help you to get a clearer picture of the situation.
- o   Ask your sources to recommend more sources

Example: The Red Cross' Haiti relief fund raised $26 million through texting in just a couple of weeks. People were able to donate $10 by texting to the American Red Cross. Social media played a key role since Twitter, YouTube and Facebook were filled with messages from survivors and photos of the devastation as well as information about aid efforts.

Cellphones Save Lives in Haiti
Text "Haiti" to 90999 and a $10 donation will be added to your phone bill.

American Red Cross

DONATE NOW

3. Crosscheck the information you receive through social media. When using and communicating information about a crisis, be sure that the information you present is as accurate as possible. Otherwise, there is a high risk of spreading rumours and falsehoods!

Key steps:
- o   Cooperate and interact with the sources of information
- o   Crosscheck with public authorities and relevant private organisations.
- o   Keep in mind that in crisis situations information is always ambiguous to a certain degree. Do not wait too long with communicating to citizens. If you don't know for sure, tell people.

Example: InSTEDD and the Red Cross utilised Ushahidi during the Haiti Earthquake to crowdsource information from people on the ground in order the gathered information to support coordination efforts between the various humanitarian relief providers. Ushahidi is regarded as a credible source of information given that it provides accurate information by conducting checks and verifying reports received from a range of external sources.

5. Ensure that the information you share through social media is **relevant both for your target audience and the social media platform**. For instance when you try to reach young people, it's better to use Facebook and provide short, simple, and easy to read information.

Key Steps:
o Consult the social media analytics tools in order to identify which social media platform is most popular for your target audiences.
o Ensure that the information you share is relevant for your target group and easy to understand.

E. Guidelines for the organization of crisis management activities in an era with social media

Private organizations increasingly communicate with their audience using new media applications. But what organizational requirements need to be met in order to be able to make an effective use of new media applications during crises?

1. **Develop a strategy on the use of new media applications before, during, and after a crisis**.

Key steps:
o Determine your social media goals in relation to your crisis management activities.
o Consider the social media landscape of your country and assess which platforms can be used towards which goals and towards which target audiences.
o Encourage your target audience to get into social media and engage with you.
o Compile a social media policy for all employees of the organization. Decide who will handle your social media accounts.
o Use analytics to track progress.
o Adjust your strategy if needed.

2. **Do not rely on social media alone**. Social Media must be part of you wider communications strategy given that in many crises the use of social media was quite limited. Only through the development of a holistic communication strategy involving various communications channels will the social media be effective.

Key steps:
o Determine the most popular communication channels and tools for your target audience and
o use both traditional and new media technologies in order to be sure that the information you want to share will reach the correct individuals. When the crisis affects the general population it would be wiser for organizations to utilize both

traditional media technologies and social media when supporting and communicating with the public.

3. **Establish collaboration and communication channels with public authorities before a crisis.** The development of strong relations with a public authority before a crisis will enable you to gather and disseminate accurate and consistent messages from credible sources.

Key steps:
o Identify the most relevant public authorities
o Lay the groundwork: determine your goals and expectations
o Build trust through meetings and regular contacts
o Set the most preferred communication channels

4. **Train and support staff to effectively use social media.** Private organizations must ensure that all personnel accessing social media applications know the social media policy of the organisation and are trained to use it properly.

Key steps:
o Determine your social media strategy
o Train your staff on how to use effectively social media
o Assign specific roles. The creation of a social media expert team responsible for communicating with the organisations customers through social media could be of great importance.

Example: Wal Mart is an example of a private organisation extensively using new technologies during crisis situations. In particular, in the crisis of hurricane Katrina Wal Mart established one of the first online Emergency Contact Services to be accessed through any in-store kiosk and through its website, helping the public to locate and communicate with their friends and families. Wal Mart has also developed **specific guidelines** which are available online for both associates and customers to follow in a crisis situation.

4. CONCLUSION

In this report, we have provided guidelines for public and private organizations regarding the use of social media in crisis situations. The aim of these guidelines was to advance social media usage by both citizens and organisations during crises in order to improve crisis management activities and, to also enhance the safety and security of citizens. Within this document, a distinction was made between guidelines for public and private organisations. This has been done because public and private organizations may have different tasks, responsibilities and stakes during a crisis situation. In addition, the guidelines were divided into five different categories. 1) Promotion of new media before crisis situations. 2) Communicating with citizens via new media during crises. 3) Communicating with citizens via new media after crises 4) Using information from new media in crisis management activities. 5) Implications for the organisation of crisis management activities. Following the tips and tricks provided in this report, organizations should be able to make (more) efficient use of social media during any type of crisis, and consequently, increase the self-resilience and thus safety and security of citizens.