



Social Media in an Emergency

A Best Practice Guide



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Authority

This best practice guide has been developed by the Wellington CDEM Group and is effective from the 1st July 2012.

This best practice guide should be read in conjunction with the Wellington Region CDEM Group Plan.

Development



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CDEM: Civil Defence Emergency Management.

CIMS: Coordinated Incident Management System.

EMIS: Emergency Management Information System - a new system providing enhanced situational awareness and better oversight of assets and resources available.

EOC: Emergency Operations Centre.

IMT: Incident Management Team - led by an Incident Controller and as the name suggests, responsible for the management of an emergency or incident.

PIM: Public Information Manager.

P&I: Planning and Intelligence.

RT: Retweet. See Glossary for definition.

Introduction to the guide

Social media and benefits to the CDEM sector

Social media are a type of online media that allow for conversation. At the heart of social media is interaction, which differentiates it from traditional media. **“Social media is essentially a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking and bookmarking online”** (Jones, 2009). Social media gives people the feeling of being connected and linked with other sites, resources or people (Jones, 2009).

Social media and social networking are rapidly growing forms of communication that present an opportunity for the Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) sector. Access to timely, accurate and consistent information is of high importance in emergency events (Leadbeater, 2010), and as NGIS Australia (2009) highlight, social media can be used to improve crisis management through both:

- Improving information gathering (e.g. through using such sites to request specific, required information from volunteers and citizens in inaccessible areas), and
- Improving information sharing (e.g. in improving the efficiency of information sharing by reaching larger groups of people instantly).

This technology is already being used by the CDEM sector in New Zealand, providing practical benefits such as:

- Building preparedness among the community during the readiness phase,
- Increasing the amount and speed of information gathered during the response phase,
- Informing a targeted response by identifying key areas of concern,
- Increasing the speed at which the community is informed,
- Increasing the number of people informed and the cost-effectiveness of information dissemination,
- Increasing the speed at which rumours are dispelled,
- Improving monitoring of public needs (including

through the use of analytic tools),

- Improving situational awareness for personnel on the ground in crisis zones, and
- Increasing feelings of connectedness among the community and building stronger relationships with the community.

The use of social media is therefore extremely important to any current or future emergency response. **It is important to note that social media should be used in conjunction with traditional media and is therefore not a standalone technology.**

Scope of the guide

This Best Practice Guide will help your CDEM organisation to effectively use social media to engage the community and allow timely two-way information sharing during an emergency. This will create a more flexible CDEM response that can be more tailored to meet the communities' needs (as determined by the community).

It addresses problems raised in overseas literature and experience, as well as issues raised by social media experts and key stakeholders during focus groups.

The focus of the guide is to **provide practical advice for using social media during the response phase**. The 'readiness phase' is only included where actions or decisions need to be made to plan for and prepare for the use of social media during an emergency.

Companion document

An additional literature review document is available which outlines the overall research project, the method by which this guide was developed and summarises key literature related to the use of social media in emergency management. This document is available for download here: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/social-media/> and is a recommended read for anyone interested in further information about the project or the use of social media in the CDEM context.

How to use this guide

This guide contains practical advice that is

organised into three main sections: prior to, during and after an emergency. These sections will cover specific issues identified in the literature and/or previous experience. Each section offers practical actions/solutions and best practice recommendations. Where appropriate, useful further readings, tips and/or example case studies are included. The symbols below indicate where this further material is provided.



This symbol appears next to helpful further reading(s)



This symbol appears next to important tips and recommendations



This symbol appears next to example(s) or case studies

A number of Appendices are also provided. These include:

- A glossary of key social media and other terms used in the document (Additional Information, pg 42),
- Checklists summarising the main steps your organisation can take before an emergency (Additional Information, pg 44), during an emergency (Additional Information, pg 45) and after an emergency (Additional Information, pg 47) in relation to social media,
- Example templates for both the monitoring of information and the release of information via social media (Additional Information, pg 48),
- A list of useful additional resources (Additional Information, pg 50), and
- A list of relevant contacts (Additional Information, pg 50).

When to use this guide

This guide will be most effective before an emergency event and ideally will be worked through from beginning to end. Becoming familiar with and (if applicable) engaging in social media during 'peace time' is optimal for a variety of reasons including:

- Relevant personnel within your organisation will develop necessary skills and experience (through both training and exposure) with

social media ahead of time,

- Relevant policy and strategy can be developed,
- Appropriate planning for resource requirements can be undertaken,
- You can become familiar with relevant legal requirements and strategies to meet these can be implemented,
- You can build your online presence,
- Trust can be built between your community and your organisation (this will have a number of benefits, including, for example, unofficial sites will be less likely to become the first port of call in an emergency),
- You can build preparedness within your community,
- A larger number of people within your community will eventually be engaged through the medium (NGIS Australia, 2009), and
- Your community can provide feedback before an emergency (this assists in ascertaining what types of information is required and in tailoring information dissemination to specific communities; Queensland Police Service, 2011; NGIS Australia, 2009).



Further reading

Jones, R. (2009). Social media marketing 101, Part 1. Available online at: <http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2064413/Social-Media-Marketing-101-Part-1>.

Leadbeater, A. (2010). Speaking as one: The joint provision of public information in emergencies. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 25(3), pg. 22-30.

NGIS Australia. (2009). Social media helping emergency management: Final report. Available for download from: <http://gov2.net.au/files/2009/12/Project-14-Final-Report.doc>.

Queensland Police Service. (2011). Disaster management and social media – a case study. Available for download from: <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.

Before an emergency

Summary

Steps your organisation can take in preparation for using social media in an emergency event are covered in this section of the guide. The main tasks include:

- Considering at what level your organisation will engage in social media (pg 5),
- Getting familiar with the different social media types and what goals each will be most useful in achieving (pg 9),
- Making appropriate plans and developing relevant policy and strategy (pg 15),
- Considering your legal obligations (pg 19),
- Involving and training an appropriate number of staff (pg 16),
- Setting up sites (if applicable) (pg 19),
- Beginning to build your online presence and trust with your community (if applicable) (pg 21),
- Beginning to build relationships with key contacts (pg 20),
- Beginning to share information on appropriate sites (if applicable) (pg 20), and
- Beginning to interact with your online community (if applicable) (pg 21).

A detailed checklist of actions your organisation can take now to prepare for the use of social media in an emergency is provided in Additional information, pg 44.

Important considerations before engaging in social media

Before your organisation makes any decisions around engaging in social media, there are some important things to consider. Table 1 provides an overview of the levels of engagement possible in social media. The three main levels of engagement are:

Passive: involves using social media to monitor the situation and obtain information

Active: involves responding to inaccuracies and answering questions on other organisations' sites

Engaged: includes all of the above, plus running your own social media sites – this is full interaction with the public.

The table also includes the types of activities and objectives you may be able to accomplish under each level, the benefits and risks associated with each and resource requirements for each level.

These levels of engagement are on a sliding scale, therefore, it is possible to move between different levels as the situation requires and resources permit. For example, it may be beneficial to have official site(s) during the response phase, but once this is over and resource levels decrease, it may be appropriate to remove the page. Such sites would need to be linked to existing trusted sources that may not have an emergency focus, such as existing Council websites. Therefore, the magnitude and stage of the event may dictate your level of engagement with social media.

It is important to realise that **as your level of engagement increases, so does the level of resource required**. Therefore, you need to consider resource requirements and work within the capacity of your organisation. It is more damaging to have official sites that are poorly maintained than not to have an official site in the first place*. **Remember, the public will have expectations if you do choose to engage in social media. You need to be able to meet those expectations.**



It is more damaging to have official sites that are poorly maintained than not to have an official site in the first place

Other important factors to consider when deciding on your level of engagement include the **audience** (e.g. coastal rural communities may not use social media to the same extent as other communities) and the **infrastructure** available (e.g. power for servers, availability of broadband and mobile phone coverage). The robustness of the available infrastructure is important and must match requirements. You do not want people to become reliant on social media if the infrastructure can't support it. This is also a reason why social media should be used in conjunction with traditional media.

Table 1 overleaf identifies the potential activities, objectives, benefits, risk, risk mitigation, resource requirements and some examples.

* There are a number of strategies your organisation can employ if resourcing is an issue. These are covered in [Staffing for social media](#), pg. 16.

Table 1: Levels of engagement with social media*

	Passive Monitor	Active Respond	Engaged Engage
Potential activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor forums and blogs for discussion related to an emergency event or your organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correct inaccuracies on sites such as blogs, forums or wikis Answer queries raised on these sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a group on a social networking site and regularly introduce content for discussion Open up material on relevant CDEM sites for comment Listen and respond as appropriate
Potential objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information during the response or recovery phase Identify gaps in response Understand how opinion of your organisation is forming Identify improvements to the response Identify people and/or communities in need Improve situational awareness** 	<p>Objectives of passive engagement plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase speed of rumour log addressing (e.g. addressing inaccuracies and misinformation) Create a targeted response Request specific, required information Build trust between your organisation and the public 	<p>Objectives of passive and active engagement plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with your community Obtain in-depth feedback on response and information provided

* Adapted from Department of Internal Affairs. (2011). Social media in Government: High-level guidance. Department of Internal Affairs: Wellington.

** Note that in small events this is a relatively easy task to achieve, whereas in large scale events it requires a high level of resource – including a good operational management system, RSS feeds and integration into something that can be easily overseen. All data collected also needs to be stored for future reference (e.g. at future inquiries or court cases), making this a large data management/mining task.

	Passive Monitor	Active Respond	Engaged Engage
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase understanding of impact of response • Gather more information than through other means • Integrate information into EOC to improve response • Identify areas that require attention or improvement • Small resource requirements compared to other levels of engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote transparency in CDEM sector by distributing information more widely • Remain trusted source of official and authoritative information • Steer community towards correct and/or official sources of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit from the credibility of unofficial channels through providing facts and support in the right manner • Complaints may be made – this provides your organisation with an opportunity to truly engage with the community and gain valuable feedback • Gain intelligence from your community • Develop two-way trust with your community • Real-time responding
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other groups may be engaged which could have implications your organisation as an official information provider • Debate may be unrepresentative – difficult to identify and monitor all relevant information streams • Community may feel you are not present • High resource demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone of voice needs to be carefully monitored and may be difficult to convey through written statements • Official intervention on unofficial sites may not be welcomed • Corrections of information may not be believed • High resource demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to manipulation by groups or any individuals with a malicious intent • May generate large volume of responses • Providing feedback on specific issues needs active management • High resource demands • Lack of credibility due to slow responses if streamlining processes not in place prior to emergency

	Passive Monitor	Active Respond	Engaged Engage
<p>Risk mitigation</p> <p>A thorough review of SM risks and risk mitigation strategies for the CDEM sector is available on the Emergency 2.0 Wiki (http://emergency20wiki.org/wiki/index.php/Risk_and_Mitigation_checklists)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise your monitoring of social media through traditional media – explain why you are unable to respond and that information is being taken into consideration Build trust with your community through traditional means available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of conditions of posting should be understood Any corrections put forward should be based on facts only, not opinion Staff should be appropriately trained on how they are expected to respond and behave on sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate objectives to participants Contingency planning to accommodate large number of responses Have dedicated and adequate resource to manage online debate Establish and communicate clear guidelines on appropriate posts Have appropriate policy in place prior
<p>Resource requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even passive monitoring can have high resource requirements during an emergency event – but accurate monitoring will be crucial to an informed response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites would need to be monitored regularly and a number of staff in your organisation would need to be provided with appropriate training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate resources would need to be allocated for regular monitoring of, and engagement on, sites and an adequate number of staff trained. During an emergency, this will require 24/7 resources
<p>Real-life examples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of Facebook groups have recently been set up by the community to vent/discuss/share frustrations and issues around new home heating rules in Christchurch. Environment Canterbury has chosen to actively monitor these pages and has used the information gathered to assist in creating more targeted, clear and concise messages, without entering into online discussions which could easily denigrate into online arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In recent bad weather, the Police and newspapers reported Hutt City River had burst its banks. This implied to residents that water had gone over the stop banks when it had actually only breached a flood plain, affecting two minor roads. This was retracted and corrected, (with comments on articles) and the community directed to the Council's official Facebook page for updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to the Rena grounding (off the coast of Tauranga), the Bay of Plenty Council communications team began to interact with the local community and interested groups across NZ through social media. They successfully used the forum to provide up-to-date information, gauge community feeling and provided an avenue for the community to vent, discuss and relate to one another. The team has been praised both online and at community meetings for their efforts.

Technology types

Social media can be categorised into several basic groupings or types. Table 2 overleaf explains the main types of social media, the pros and cons of each and example tasks you could accomplish with each type.

It is important that all relevant personnel within your organisation become familiar with these different social media types and technologies. A good understanding of these will help you to identify which types are most appropriate for what you are trying to achieve (e.g. what types of technologies should be employed for different tasks).

Start by identifying what tasks you need to accomplish and then identify which social media tool will best help you to achieve these tasks.



It is important to consider what you want to accomplish first and match this with the appropriate social media tools for these tasks and goals

Note: This guide is not intended to be a “how to” guide of social media, so those new to the resource may need to look at some additional resources. As a first point of call, *Additional information* (pg 42) includes a glossary of key social media terms used throughout the guide. *Additional information* (pg 50) also includes links to resources which may be of assistance (for example, although written specifically for American Red Cross personnel, the American Red Cross Social Media Handbook offers a rather detailed social media tools tutorial; <http://www.slideshare.net/wharman/social-media-handbook-for-red-cross-field-units>).

Trends in social media use

The use of social media is the fastest growing online activity today and the popularity of various sites is constantly changing. As at December 2011, 86% of New Zealanders were active users of the internet, with 27% of these using smart phones (up from 7% in 2007; see more at <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-institutes/icdc/projects/world-internet-project>).

The table below provides an example of how quickly and dramatically the popularity of sites has changed in New Zealand over recent years.

The table below provides an example of how quickly and dramatically the popularity of sites has changed in New Zealand over recent years.

Rank	2012	2010	2007
1	Facebook	Facebook	YouTube
2	YouTube	YouTube	Old Friends
3	Trade Me*	Wikipedia	Bebo
4	Wikipedia	Bebo	Yahoo! Groups
5	Stuff*	Old Friends	My Space

* These websites are not exclusively social media sites but are included for the reasons detailed above.



Be aware of and monitor popular places where conversations are taking place – these will be invaluable sources of information in an emergency

Due to this high rate of change, your organisation needs to become and remain familiar with the different social media tools available. This will be key to identifying which tools to engage with as well as which to use for different tasks and goals.



Further reading

Department of Internal Affairs. (2011). Social media in Government: Hands-on toolbox. Department of Internal Affairs: Wellington. Available for download from: <http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/hands-on-toolbox/>.

Table 2: Social media types, pros and cons and example tasks

Social media type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example tasks
Social networks	<p>These allow the user to find, link and share with other people or groups. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, Google+ and Twitter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to have two-way interaction with the community • Ability to share a wealth of information with the public in a timely manner • Easy for public to “share” (forward on or “retweet”) information to others in their network • Higher likelihood of self-correction and improved ability to dispel myth (e.g. “mythbuster” hashtag on Twitter) • Ability to monitor common themes (e.g. water, accommodation, power, petrol or health through the use of hashtags) • Multi-device access (e.g. mobile, desktop, web-based) • Ability to “push” information out to mobiles where feed is subscribable (and at no cost in contrast to text alerts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High resource demands to maintain own sites • Twitter is traditionally limited by the number of characters you can share (e.g. there is a 140 character restriction for “tweets”). If tweets are to be retweeted, messages must be under 140 character cap. However, there are some new ways to get around the issue, which are detailed here: http://techcrack.com/top-5-ways-to-post-longer-tweets-more-than-140-characters.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerts (some example templates are provided in Additional information, pg. 48. • Building trust and a relationship with the community • Gathering information and requesting specific information • Disseminating information • Dispelling myths • Answering queries

Social media type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example tasks
SMS	<p>SMS is not a website but a text messaging service between mobile phones. SMS can be used to send messages to groups and people who can then respond, which is why SMS is classed as a form of social media in the current context. SMS is currently employed by CDEM groups in New Zealand for alerts and other tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach many people quickly – cell phones are likely to be carried at all times • High rate of cell phone ownership in community, so large potential base • Easy for people to forward the information on to others. This information is also likely to be trusted as the sender is known to the receiver • Ability to send location based messages using specific cell phone towers • Network independent (e.g. messages can be sent to phones on all mobile phone network providers in NZ) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited in number of characters can share • May only reach people who have subscribed • Small financial cost • Limited cell phone coverage in isolated rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerts • Disseminating information • Gathering information and requesting specific information • Specific calls to action
Media-sharing networks	<p>These allow the user to create, upload and share videos or photos with others. Examples include Flickr, YouTube and Pinterest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can request visual validating information through these sites • Can share rich information (e.g. “how to” videos) that improve public response and improve trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your channel may get lost due to large volume of information shared on these sites • Internal network limitations to upload large image and video files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering information and requesting specific information • Disseminating information • Image gallery for media requests • Live streaming of press conferences

Social media type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example tasks
Community discussion forums	These allow users to discuss specific topics and issues with groups of other users. Users can create new threads to discuss specific topics of interest to them. In New Zealand, the most popular community discussion forum currently is TradeMe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can monitor existing relevant conversations or start on any topic • Can converse with large online communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May generate a high level of responses which creates a high level of resource demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining feedback on response • Building trust and a relationship with the community • Gathering information and requesting specific information
Blogs	These allow users to access of write articles on any subject, which are generally displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs allow visitors to comment and can either be read through a standard browser or a RSS reader. Examples include Blogger and WordPress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good way to share personal experiences of employees with the public – very clear guidelines should be provided in this situation • Provides candid insights into community member experiences • No text character limit • Can imbed rich content such as photos and videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires high level of dedication and time to create own official blog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building trust and a relationship with the community • Obtaining feedback on response • Sharing information • Disseminating information/alerts (through community subscribing for updates) • Story telling (e.g. an insider's guide)
Wikis	These allow the user to contribute and share information about any topic, including people, places and events. Wikis can be set up for specific topics, such as emergency management. Wikis are generally open for all, or a large number of users to contribute and edit (referred to as "crowdsourcing"). Examples include Wikipedia and WikiHow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can see what misunderstandings and misinformation exists on relevant topics • Wikis on Wikipedia rank highly in search rankings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If smaller user-base, require high level of monitoring to ensure information remains relevant and accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering information • Dispelling myths and correct false facts and misinformation <p>EXAMPLE: In Australia, wiki technology is effectively being used to provide a free global resource for using social media and new technologies in emergencies. This is available at http://emergency20wiki.org/</p>

Social media type	Description	Pros	Cons	Example tasks
Social news	<p>These allow the user to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on the content. The most popular site of this type in New Zealand is Stuff, and for the upper North Island, the New Zealand Herald</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can monitor candid, anonymous feedback on the response effort • Ability to dispel myth (e.g. post link to official source where misunderstandings are identified) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to trace specific users if valid issues arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining feedback on response • Gathering information • Disseminating information
Mashup/mapping software	<p>These allow the user to combine large sets of data from multiple sources and map them to provide a visual oversight of the information available. Examples include ArcGIS/Esri and Ushahidi. To use these technologies your GIS data needs to be exported to a common format and then uploaded onto the site you choose to use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can handle large data sets • Provides greater understanding of locations for people unfamiliar with the area • Being visual, it is easy for people to grasp the information • Gives good oversight of information from multiple sources • Can be easier to understand than traditional GIS maps • In some cases, the community can also add to the map • Data in maps is available to add to all other maps. This makes sharing information easier – including from others’ maps to your own • Ensures GIS and P&I work more closely together • Fast and easy to update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires skilled staff, so additional training may be required • There can be compatibility issues with information from different Councils across New Zealand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mythbusting – particularly through identifying inaccuracies on others maps and pointing to the correct, official information on your map(s) • Provide real-time mapping of locations of important life preserving provisions (e.g. water tankers, recovery centres) • Map information relating to the top 5 tasks of the EOC (these will differ depending on the type of event and the context of the event). <p>EXAMPLE: Environment Canterbury used ArcGIS during the Canterbury earthquakes to map important information. This was embedded on their website. Examples of their maps are available http://www.arcgis.com/home/search.html?q=Environment%20Canterbury&t=content</p>

Further technological information

How can my organisation maximise the number of people reached through social media?

Targeting the most common social media technologies will maximise coverage within the community and is better than attempting to target specific audiences through specific social media types. Remember that the stereotypes of who is reached through different technologies only apply in peace time – use in emergency situations will differ as people are far more likely to share information through their networks (e.g. neighbours, family, friends) during these times.

Key to maximising the reach of social media is encouraging this secondary and tertiary reach through “snowballing”. People in the community should be encouraged to pass messages on to existing networks via any means available (e.g. other social media, traditional media, face to face). Where possible, identify key influencers to act as champions for your organisation and spread your official information more widely as well. Traditional media (e.g. television, radio) should also be encouraged to report straight from official social media sources (called “crossover” between traditional and new media), as this will further increase your reach and reduce your overall workload.



Example

During the Canterbury earthquake, Telecom put out the tweet “Please keep all calls nationwide to a minimum to save capacity for emergency services. TXT instead if you can. #eqnz.” This was retweeted (RT) widely naturally, however, many organisations specifically add the phrase “please RT widely” to encourage this.



People in the community (including key influencers) should be encouraged to pass messages on to existing networks via any means available

It is also important to ensure useful emergency data is subscribable (e.g. via RSS feeds). Tracking the number of people who “like” your page or are “following” you will give you an idea of the reach of your shared information.

How can my organisation minimise language issues?

Information should be translated into other languages where ever possible. The two other official languages of New Zealand, te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). It is also important to consider people visiting from other countries and citizens for whom English is not a first language.

However, it is not possible to cater for everyone, especially during times where the speed of information delivery is key. It is therefore an effective strategy to encourage the sharing of information among those in the community who receive and understand messages with those they know may experience communication challenges.

How can my organisation minimise issues for people with disabilities?

To ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged by the use of social media, it is important to deliver that same information across multiple channels (e.g. website, radio, television) where it can be made available and accessible to all users. Similarly, sharing the same information across different social media types (e.g. video sharing sites, social networking sites) will increase its accessibility.

Again, it’s a good idea to encourage the sharing of information among community members, particularly to those with disabilities which may result in communication challenges.

Should my organisation use pre-existing social media technologies or build our own?

Free social media technologies are generally of high quality and enjoy pre-existing widespread use. In addition, they are well equipped to handle large volumes of traffic (such as what could be experienced during an emergency event). Therefore, as a general rule of thumb, your organisation should put its money into training staff to use existing technology, rather than developing your own.

If your organisation does develop a tool (which currently may be necessary when it comes to android/iPhone applications or building analytical capabilities), it is strongly recommended these are then made free to others. This is a great way to contribute back to the online community.

How can my organisation manage any technological issues that may arise from the use of social media?

Many of the critical technological issues seen during peace time (e.g. threats to the security of information, stalkers and viruses, longevity and the rate of change in technologies) are not as problematic during the response phase.

Key to managing technological issues is ensuring staff are provided with appropriate training and resources (e.g. smart phones/other devices). This must take into account the fact that technology is always evolving, and therefore, where resources permit, training needs to be on-going. Ensuring there are enough resources allocated to social media and your organisation has flexibility in their communication tools (e.g. do not focus solely on social media) is also critical.

It is also important to vary the types of social media technologies your organisation engages with and incorporate low-tech solutions (e.g. that are less susceptible to infrastructure failures).

Policy and strategy considerations

A key element in the process of engaging with social media (as in other organisational processes) is the development of appropriate policies and strategies for its use. This section highlights specific policies and strategies that need to be considered and developed by your organisation before engaging in social media. Additional tips are included to ensure these support effective social media use during the response phase.

Keep in mind while developing such policies to ensure they emphasise adaptive problem solving, trusting your staff to analyse the situation and act appropriately. Prescriptive policies will only cause delays at times where fast action is critical.



Ensure policies for the use of social media emphasise adaptive problem solving as prescriptive policies will only cause delays at times where fast action is critical

Another useful tip is to ensure the policies your organisation develops are goal-oriented rather than process-oriented, which will reduce issues with them becoming outdated over time. This is especially important in relation to social media, which is constantly changing and evolving.

Creating a strategy for the use of social media

It is important your organisation discusses and agrees on the goals of utilising social media; these should fit with overall organisational goals and should be integrated into an overarching social media strategy. This process will help get other staff members interested and gain organisation-wide support for the initiatives. All of your social media actions will then be informed by this.

This strategy could cover:

- What your organisation will try to achieve through its use of social media
- To what level your organisation will engage in social media and in what context this level may change during different phases of an emergency
- How success against your objectives will be assessed (including clear guidance for record keeping and protocol for how success will be measured – see [After an emergency, pg 38](#) for further information)
- A content strategy outlining what types of information will be shared and how often (if applicable)
- Any on-going strategies you want to introduce to provide feedback on social media initiatives (e.g. a weekly or monthly update email of the most important interactions and summary statistics)
- Any formal links your organisation will make with other related organisations (including guidance for how information will be shared between organisations and who has authority to do what – see [Creating contacts, pg 20](#) for

further information).



Further reading

Queensland Police Service. (2011). Disaster management and social media – a case study. Available for download from <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.
State of Washington. (2010).

Guidelines and best practices for social media use in Washington State. Available for download from <http://www.governor.wa.gov/media/guidelines.pdf>.

Stephens, K. (2011). Top ten considerations for emergency management organizations utilizing social media. Available online from: <http://idisaster.wordpress.com/2011/07/26/top-social-media-considerations-for-emergency-management-organizations/>.

Staffing for social media

Key points to take into consideration when developing policies for staffing of social media include:

- Who will engage in social media?
- Consider staffing requirements before an emergency and train where necessary
- Staff should be encouraged to be adaptive and improvise
- Including levels of technical competency required will become outdated quickly – on the job training and experience before the emergency is key; if employees don't have the required skills at the time of the emergency, it's too late
- Consider including a social media component in any emergency management training provided
- Run pre-event tests of your use of social media (incorporating these with existing simulation exercises). This will give you an idea of how effective your training is and how adequate the resource available is. One tool you can use for

this is **FireBell**, a social crisis simulator. A video showing FireBell in action is available here: <http://bit.ly/firebell>

- Excellent training can also be obtained through participating in a international disaster response (predominantly in English speaking countries to reduce language issues)
- Introduce social media to your organisation's everyday practices; don't treat it as something special or additional. It may be beneficial to look at priorities within your organisation and the opportunities presented by altering existing workloads to integrate social media into daily activities. This will also assist with resource constraints
- Encourage personnel to engage in social media in their personal time – this ensures staff become familiar with tools/applications and make small mistakes on their own, rather than on behalf of their organisation
- Ensure there is a policy in place for all staff working inside the EOC and response (it is important that all staff are briefed about personal versus official use of social media)
- Consider maintaining a network of social media personnel both within your organisation and among other related organisations. These could catalogue relevant skills and be highly beneficial during an emergency (if updated regularly)
- Consider how information will be shared between personnel. For example, you may want to have passwords and other key information saved as a Google Doc
- If you are going to actively engage, remember resourcing levels will be high (e.g. requiring 24/7 resources) as using social media is like talking face to face with community groups. Tips to manage resourcing issues are provided below.



Example

The Canterbury CDEM Group now have a specific component in their emergency management training that talks about the importance of social media, how it can be used, how it was used during the Christchurch earthquakes and canvases for ideas/resources. They believe it is an important tool to inform volunteers about.

Managing resourcing issues

The most effective way to manage resourcing issues is to ensure your level of engagement does not exceed the resources available. However, resources can be stretched quickly in an emergency so it is important to have plans in place ahead of time to make the most of the resources you have at your disposal.



Scaling your use of social media to the size of your team is the best way to manage resourcing issues

Here are some things to consider and make provisions for before an emergency:

- Ensure you consider shift changes when building your pool of resources
- Have contingencies - ensure you have back up personnel trained and ready to stand in when required. Train as many staff as your resources permit, particularly staff outside the normal PIM team (e.g. utilise staff within your organisation as a first port of call before outsourcing) Where possible and advantageous, partner up with other related organisations in your area. This will reduce resource strains for both your organisation and theirs, and will assist in building relationships with other related organisations
- Consider the benefits of taking advantage of local or international volunteers (if appropriate) – particularly for monitoring sites and gathering information during the response phase. You will want to create networks during peace time to assist in fast set up during the response phase and also consider monitoring requirements for these personnel. The Virtual Operations Support Group Website (<http://vosg.us/active-vosts/>) lists the details of active teams of volunteers across the world (including in New Zealand). A presentation introducing the VOST concept is available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/CMilliganNZVOST/vost-presentation-basics/>
- Consider making use of social media management tools – these will reduce your workload by connecting various social

media sites (e.g. HootSuite or Tweetdeck, sending one message out to a number of sites simultaneously, see [Managing incoming information, pg 32](#) for further information). Get familiar with these before an emergency

- Remember you can create specific sites for specific events. You can then reference to other known sites (e.g. official) where required. Take this into account when planning your level of engagement with social media.



Further reading

Chavez, C., Repas, M.C. & Stefaniak, T.L. (2010). A new way to communicate with residents: Local government use of social media to prepare for emergencies. An ICMA Report. ICMA: Washington.

Stephens, K. (2011). Top ten considerations for emergency management organizations utilizing social media. Available online from: <http://idisaster.wordpress.com/2011/07/26/top-social-media-considerations-for-emergency-management-organizations/>.

Appropriate social media use for employees*

Generally, existing code of conduct policies for employees are applicable here, so your organisation probably does not need to develop specific policies for this. However, key behaviours to encourage in employees engaging with social media (which you may want to reflect in any relevant policies) include:

- Be adaptive
- Be honest
- Presume intelligent consumers (presume the public will take information as you intend and make appropriate decisions based on this)
- Be a public servant
- Be a good custodian

*Adapted from Department of Internal Affairs. (2011). Social media in Government: High-level guidance. Department of Internal Affairs: Wellington.

It is also important to ensure all EOC and response staff understand guidelines regarding personal versus official use of social media. Personal views during an emergency cannot be shared on official social media channels (as is the case with traditional media).

Streamlining of information release and labelling of reliability

Social media creates a problem for traditional CDEM information release processes as information is now quickly and easily shared between large groups of people. If your organisation, as an official information releaser, is slow in releasing information, you could easily lose control of the situation, lose credibility and other sources of information could become the first port of call. This has a range of implications, including increased spreading of misinformation.

Therefore, it is extremely important that policies exist within your organisation that allow information release processes to be streamlined during the response phase. This can create an issue for CDEM organisations who do not want to release unverified information. It is therefore important to achieve a balance between speed and credibility.



If your organisation is slow at releasing information you could easily lose credibility and control and other sources of information may become the first port of call

It is hence recommended that such policies cover the release of unverified information, including steps to take to mitigate the risks involved (e.g. labelling the reliability of the information). Further information regarding this is provided in [Alerts and information release, pg 27](#).

When developing policy on the release of information it is important to consider the risk reward benefit cost of potential inaccuracies. For example, if the risk of releasing a piece of information is low but the cost on not releasing it is high, the information should be released. Guidance around this decision-making process should be provided for staff. Before an event, appropriate CDEM staff should assist in establishing

procedures.

Finally, it will be beneficial to include templates for emergency alerts in your policies, which will speed up the information release process and provide consistency in messages. Some example templates you can work from are provided in [Additional information, pg 50](#).

Key considerations for gathered information in an emergency event

Some important considerations for plans and policies for the use of community information during the response phase include:

- As a first port of call, use existing policies and processes (where possible and advantageous)
- What social media types and channels you will monitor and respond to during different phases of an emergency (you may want to develop a Collection Plan to summarise these decisions, see [Monitoring community information, pg 31](#) for further information)
- What other resources and expertise you may need to bring in to deal with the volume of information – it is important to start developing relationships with these key agencies, organisations and personnel ahead of time
- What analytic tools you will use – it is important to get familiar with what is available and any training needs during peace time (see [Managing incoming information, pg 32](#) for further information)
- What process you will use to filter and aggregate incoming information
- How you will deal with your legal requirements (e.g. record-retention) during the response phase (see [Legal considerations, pg 19](#) for further information)
- What processes you will use to validate community information (see [Validating community information, pg 34](#) for further information)
- How you will incorporate community information into the EOC (including how gathered information via social media will fit into your organisation's decision-making processes) (see [Integrating community information into the EOC, pg 34](#) for further information)
- What prioritisation process you will use

for community information (see [Prioritising community information, pg 35](#) for further information).

Further information regarding the management of incoming information during the response phase is provided in [Information in, pg 31](#).

Design of sites

Some important factors you may want to consider regarding the design of sites when developing a “Design Guide” include:

- The use of logos and themes – it is recommended your organisation uses the Civil Defence logo on any sites as an identifier of a credible information source
- Consistency between pages for larger organisations with multiple offices
- Guidelines for the appropriateness of linking with other pages, profiles or people through official sites – this is seen as an endorsement of the linked site so any links need to be carefully considered
- Content guidelines (e.g. what types of information will be shared on your page)
- Your ability to share with existing social networks.



Further reading

American Red Cross. (2009). Social media handbook for Red Cross field units. Available for download from <http://www.slideshare.net/wharman/social-media-handbook-for-red-cross-field-units>.

Legal considerations

A number of legal issues can arise for your organisation as a result of engaging with social media. Most legal issues are easily avoided by using common sense and observing existing codes of conduct. However it is obviously important to have a good understanding of what your obligations are. It is important to note that legal issues in this space have not yet been fully tested by the courts and are rapidly evolving.

This section highlights some important legal

considerations and provides strategies to ensure these are met. This guidance is not legal advice and should not be relied on in that way.

Copyright

Copyright is the right to prevent another person from carrying out unauthorised copying. The usual copyright rules apply to social media, so copying text or images into a social media application from a copyrighted source is likely to constitute a breach. Citations should always be provided, crediting the original source. Depending on the intended use of the citation, permission may need to be obtained. “Sharing” (rather than copying) content is a way to meet these legal requirements.



Where ever you post copyrighted material on social media pages you must cite the original source

Your organisation should also consider putting your work out under a Creative Commons licence – this encourages the sharing of information among organisations across the world. More information is available from: <http://creativecommons.org.nz/>.

Privacy

Privacy legislation in New Zealand generally prohibits the publication, or any other use, of personal information about individuals without their knowledge. Legal requirements around privacy are detailed in the Information Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act.

Release of any photographic material of disaster sites is therefore potentially problematic on social media sites if there are any identifiable people in such images. Appropriate amendments (e.g. masking faces and vehicle number plates) to any such images should therefore be made before posting online.

Comment guidelines for the public

If your organisation does decide to actively engage in social media and create an official page, it

is important to develop and include comment guidelines or participation rules for the public. These give you the right to regulate material that is shared on your page and, if necessary, remove unconstructive or defamatory material.



Example

Both the New Zealand Red Cross (<http://www.facebook.com/NewZealandRedCross/info>) and Department of Internal Affairs (<http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/hands-on-toolbox/>) provide examples of these you can use as a template.

Record-retention

As with other business records, record-retention is legally required for all of your organisation's social media interactions and comments (including when old posts are edited). The amount of data required to be backed up can be extensive, so this legal requirement can be difficult, especially for smaller organisations.

Transcripts should present discussions in their original published format. Each entry should be accredited to its author and, where possible, be accompanied by a time and date stamp.



You are legally required to keep written transcripts of all interactions and comments made on your social media site(s) – including any edits made to old posts

It is also important to keep records of all submissions not published because they breached the stated rules (along with recognition of the author and a time and date stamp). It is not necessary to keep a record of spam or repeat entries.

It may be difficult to access a transcript where you do not directly administer the site, or the application does not support transcript export. In these cases, you can request a transcript from the site's administrators or moderators, or copy

and paste the content into a document from your browser, noting the author and date.

Some technological solutions you can use for record-retention include **Hootsuite Archives** (a paid for service) or "**yourTwapperKeeper**" - a free application you need to install on your own server. More information is available here: <https://github.com/jobrieniii/yourTwapperKeeper>. A wiki of a range of social media monitoring tools (both free and paid) your organisation could also use are available here: <http://wiki.kenburbary.com/social-media-monitoring-wiki>.

All such recorded information is likely to be subject to the requirements of the Public Records Act 2005 and will be subject to the Official Information Act 1982.



Further reading

Department of Internal Affairs. (2011). *Social media in Government: Hands-on toolbox*. Department of Internal Affairs: Wellington. Available for download from: <http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/hands-on-toolbox/>.

Dawson, J. (2012). *Social media in local government*. ALGIM. Available online at: <http://www.algim.org.nz/socialmedia>.

Creating contacts

Strong relationships with community groups and other organisations will improve your response, as detailed in [Links with communities and other organisations, pg 25](#). Beginning to build these relationships before an emergency will be beneficial during an emergency. Some helpful actions your organisation could take include:

- Start to build relationships with other key local CDEM organisations. Where applicable, make plans with these organisations regarding how resources and workloads will be shared in an emergency. Identifying and creating links with other CDEM organisations who are successfully using social media in your area will also be beneficial.

- Start to build relationships with key community groups.
- Consider creating contacts with other related groups, such as student bodies at local universities.
- Consider creating contacts with key search engine operators (e.g. at Google, Yahoo, Bing) to arrange and contractually confirm prioritisation for key official sites during an emergency.
- Consider creating contacts and/or “following” other key organisations such as: MetService, the Automobile Association (AA), New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), telecommunications companies and roading, water, electricity and gas companies.

Building your online presence

It is best to begin building your online presence before an emergency. This will help foster trust between your organisation and your community. Key ways you can build your online presence and trust with your community include:

- Remember the CDEM name is already trusted among the community; therefore you are not starting from scratch. Using CDEM logos on your sites is a good way to benefit from this pre-existing trust



Example

GeoNet has effectively built trust online and become an authoritative source of information for the public. They are the sole respected source of earthquake information in NZ.

The Wellington Emergency Management Office (WEMO) has also effectively used Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/WemoNZ/>) to build their online presence, with over 2000 “likes” currently.

- Keep your social media activities to a manageable level – this is key to ensuring you are able to regularly maintain sites

- You can build your own sites or “piggyback” on others (e.g. use pre-existing Council websites)
- Where you do create sites, create organisation-level, rather individual-level sites. This means anyone in your organisation can communicate via sites without losing any trust and credibility that has been developed
- Sites should be checked at least once a day in peace time and updated often (this is necessary for providing timely responses, remaining interesting and removing negative and spam content quickly). Consider setting up alerts to the phones of those responsible for monitoring sites when a new post is made
- Be ready to respond as quickly as possible when an emergency event occurs (even if you are just pointing to existing resources or other points of information – some information is better than no information)
- Stick with your area of expertise, work or profession but be willing to connect the public with resources and accounts outside of your area of expertise
- Ensure your sites have continuation in branding (e.g. consistency over icons), as visual recognition is critical
- Always use common language in posts (e.g. avoid the use of acronyms)
- Consider your tone – this is very important when building relationships
- Be creative and engage the audience. Be interactive and responsive.



Example

WEMO has made posts referring to events such as “Marmageddon” and the Zombie Apocalypse to generate interest on their page and keep their online community engaged

- Ask for feedback on current practices and potential improvements – this shows the community they are valued as well as inevitably improving your online activities
- Be personal, informal and build credibility as a human face. Names can be used to humanise personnel during the readiness phase
- Consider providing the community with information regarding what to expect from CDEM during an emergency, particularly in

relation to your response via social media. Making resource constraints clear will help manage community expectations, making your job easier during the response phase. More information regarding community expectations is provided in [Public and organisations - a potential mismatch](#), pg 26.

This advice relates to building relationships and trust during peace time specifically. Recommendations for building trust during the response phase are provided in [Building trust with the community during an event](#), pg 25.



Further reading

American Red Cross. (2009). Social media handbook for Red Cross field units. Available for download from <http://www.slideshare.net/wharman/social-media-handbook-for-red-cross-field-units>.

During an emergency

Summary

This section covers best practice advice for the use of social media during the response phase. Key topics covered include:

- How to most effectively manage the resources available to you during peak times, including consideration of additional resources you may be able to pull in (pg 24);
- How to work effectively with other organisations and community groups to reduce the overall workload for all (pg 25);
- How to foster and build trust with the online community during the response phase (pg 25);
- How to most effectively disseminate information through social media (if applicable), including (pg 26):
 - Understanding community expectations and how to manage these (pg 26),
 - How to effectively send out information and alerts and maximise the reach of this information (pg 27 & 29),
 - How to manage issues around the release of unverified information (pg 28),
 - How to make decisions around what needs sign off from the Controller and how to streamline this process (pg 28), and
 - How to effectively dispel rumour and address the rumour log (pg 29)
- How to most effectively manage and use incoming information (pg 31), including:
 - Recognising the important role of community information (pg 31),
 - How best to monitor and manage incoming information (including through the use of analytic tools) (pg 31 & 32),
 - How to validate community information (pg 34),
 - How to integrate community information into the EOC (pg 34),
 - How to prioritise community information (pg 35),
 - How to provide feedback and close the loop (pg 36)

A detailed checklist of actions your organisation can take now to prepare for the use of social media in an emergency is provided in [Additional information](#), pg. 44.

Social media are highly useful to the CDEM sector during the response phase. This section will guide you through how to most effectively use this resource during the response phase.

Optimally, this section should not be treated as standalone – the advice given in **before an emergency** should be considered and necessary steps taken in peace time to assist your organisation's effectiveness in using social media during the response phase.



The best strategy for effectively using social media in an emergency is to make appropriate plans and actions before the event

Resource allocation

During the response phase it is extremely important that your organisation remains adaptive with regard to resource allocation. There are a number of pre-planning steps you can take to manage resourcing issues during the response phase, and these are covered in **Staffing for social media, pg 16**.

Remember that adequately managing your resourcing issues is extremely important to the overall effectiveness of your response, ensuring:

- Queries and pleas for help are responded to as soon as possible,
- Misinformation and myths are managed and responded to quickly to reduce spreading (e.g. through using the #mythbusting hashtag),
- Spam (e.g. irrelevant or unhelpful content) is removed in a timely manner,
- Conversations are appropriately moderated,
- The community feels informed, and
- Information is gathered in a timely manner.



Key to managing your organisation's resourcing issues in an emergency event is remaining adaptive

Here are a few steps you can take to manage resourcing issues during the response phase:

- **Adapt where possible.** If you are struggling, employ new strategies to meet your resourcing needs. Be open to trying new things, such as those outlined below.
- **Use social media management tools.** These will simultaneously update multiple pages and sites, reducing the information dissemination and management workload. Examples include HootSuite and Tweetdeck.
- **Use mashup/mapping tools.** These will summarise large sets of information from multiple sources, providing a visual overview.
- **Consider making use of volunteers and/or crowdsourcing.** Volunteers can be useful for monitoring sites and gathering information during peak times in the response phase. There may be some supervision requirements for these personnel so this needs to be considered when making decisions around the use of volunteers.
- **Consider outsourcing.** Outsourcing has the particular benefit of being able to take advantage of time zone differences, giving your New Zealand based staff a much-needed break over the night shift.
- **Consider partnering up** with other local and related organisations – particularly if they have pre-existing and well-established pages. This will diffuse the overall workload between a large pool of people and assist in creating a co-ordinated approach.
- **Aim to create a cross over between 'new media' and 'old media'** where traditional media report directly from social media sources. This reduces the information distribution workload and maximises the number of people reached through a single media.



Further reading

Queensland Police Service. (2011). Disaster management and social media – a case study. Available for download from <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.

Links with the community and other organisations

Creating links with the community and other organisations is essential in creating a coordinated response and maximising the effectiveness of your response.

A key benefit of developing effective partnerships with other organisations during the response phase is improved sharing of information, ensuring all organisations are on the same page and have the same information available. This reduces miscommunications and the workload for all.

Creating and maintaining links with the community and community groups in the response phase will also benefit your organisation; particularly in the unique climate social media has created. Social media are excellent at fostering and organising community-led initiatives and it is important that CDEM organisations do not create a top-down approach that makes these groups feel undervalued and unimportant. These groups are an important resource for you to utilise.



Developing strong relationships with other organisations and online community groups will assist you in creating a coordinated approach and will enhance the effectiveness of your response

Some recommendations for fostering these important relationships include:

- Recognise how valuable other organisations and groups can be – and the implications of not interacting with them
- Your organisation needs to acknowledge, embrace, facilitate and utilise these groups
- Tailor messages so they are relevant to the specific group (e.g. if they are local, provide local information)
- Be constructive
- Encourage an open dialogue and recognise people are intelligent information consumers
- Be up front with other organisations using sites – they want to help so explain how they can

and make it clear when and why they are being counterproductive

- It is important to remember that these groups' motives are generally in line with your Civil Defence motives, however they can also be self-serving
- Consider their motives and work alongside these groups while this remains productive – shut these groups down as a last resort
- An important point to note is that Police can only shut sites down if they breach the overarching site's (e.g. Facebook's) terms and conditions.



Example

During the Rena 2011 response, BOP Regional Council mentioned partner organisations in their tweets to make others aware of the partnership and also linked to their pages on their Facebook page. For example:

"We're just one of the councils involved in the #Rena response with @MaritimeNZ – read more about the experience [http://www.boprc.govt.nz/news-centre/media-releases/november-2011/rena-update-from-maritime-nz-\(164\)/](http://www.boprc.govt.nz/news-centre/media-releases/november-2011/rena-update-from-maritime-nz-(164)/)



Further reading

American Red Cross. (2010). The case for integrating crisis response with social media. Available online from: <http://emergencysocialdata.posterous.com/the-case-for-integrating-crisis-response-with>.

Building trust with the community during an event

Ideally, your organisation will have begun to build trust with the community during peace time.

However, the response phase is also a critical time where trust can be further developed or, unfortunately, lost.

Following are some ideas your organisation can employ to develop trust during an emergency event:

- Remember the community already trusts the Civil Defence name so your organisation is not starting from scratch
- Remember you have a duty to participate online if you have set up an official site during peace time
- Show that you are a credible, authoritative and honest source of information
- Acknowledge that something has happened and start releasing information as soon as possible after an event occurs
- For initial messaging, use key actions individuals within the community can take and point to existing sources of official information they will find helpful
- Don't go quiet, keep smaller pieces of information coming out between larger releases and re-release key information at regular intervals (as with television, not everyone is monitoring social media at the same time)
- Use community information and recognise their contributions
- People will trust honesty and understand information may not be confirmed at the time of release
- Consider using videos of spokespeople posted on media-sharing sites such as YouTube (this is easy to do from press conferences) – their credibility will add to yours
- If you do get something wrong, acknowledge it publicly and take steps to remedy the situation
- Your organisation must stick with its area of expertise, work or profession in all online response activities.

Information out

This section will provide strategies and recommendations for most effectively using social media to disseminate information during the response phase. Social media has changed the climate the CDEM sector operates in, and as such, these recommendations may not be in line with your organisation's traditional processes. It is important to remain open and flexible to the ideas presented.

Public and organisation expectations – a potential mismatch

The community expects the CDEM sector to release timely information and is willing to trade a certain amount of reliability and accuracy of information for this. If information needs are not met through official sources, the community will turn to other sources of information.

This may pose a problem for your organisation, as with many others in the CDEM sector, who see the early release of unverified information as a concern and an unfavourable practice.

However, in the climate social media has created, it is impossible for CDEM organisations to control the flow of information. If you do not release information, others will and you will lose credibility and authority.



To meet community expectations it is extremely important that your organisation streamlines its information release processes during the response phase

The following sections emphasise the importance of releasing information in a timely manner and provide strategies of how to do this responsibly, reducing the associated risks as much as possible.



Further reading

NGIS Australia. (2009). Social media helping emergency management: Final report. Available for download from <http://gov2.net.au/files/2009/12/Project-14-Final-Report.doc>.

Queensland Police Service. (2011). Disaster management and social media – a case study. Available for download from <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.

Alerts and information release

Social media are ideal for releasing alerts and general response information. Table 2 provides an overview of the different types of social media that are most effective for these tasks. In summary, you could use:

- Social networks such as Twitter to release short alerts to large groups of people who have subscribed
- Social networks such as Facebook to disseminate more detailed response information
- Blogging software to send out updates (where community members have previously subscribed)
- Media-sharing networks such as YouTube to disseminate information. This is a particularly effective way to create a crossover between new media and traditional media, where traditional media report directly from social media sources
- SMS to release alerts to large groups of people who have previously subscribed or to cell phones in a particular location
- Consider live tweeting/streaming from press conferences
- Consider connections between sites (e.g. embedding messages)
- Streamline the release of information during the response phase (see the section below for further information)
- Have templates for the release of alerts to speed up the process and provide consistency between releases (see Section 11 for some examples)
- Respond as quickly as possible even if you are only pointing to existing sources of official information and not providing full answers – the timeliness of information release is more important to the community
- Label the reliability of information
- Provide ranges rather than specifics (e.g. power out to 10-20% of the city) – this is less likely to have negative consequences for public perceptions of the reliability of authoritative sources of information
- Update information as much as possible
- Encourage the sharing of messages (e.g. RT for Twitter)
- Set up key subject matter experts within CIMS teams (that are relevant to information needs) to contribute – this will reduce double handling of information and again speed up the process
- Agreed information release times may be useful for larger heavily detailed reports (e.g. for press conferences and official media releases). It may also be useful to agree times for information release with the public, but state that information may be updated between these times as information comes to hand
- Allow the community to set up a channel and lead a slice of the information – this will let them know they are making an impact and you'll have more chance of getting useful information coming in
- Work with popular search engines (e.g. Google) to establish top rankings for searches of keywords (e.g. 'earthquake' 'flood' 'tsunami'). This will assist in promoting official sites and sources of information.



Example

During the Canterbury earthquakes, tweets from Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury were embedded on media websites such as Stuff and The Press to help with the flow of information to those who didn't have access to, or didn't use, Twitter. It gave their official information high prominence and greatly assisted in getting key messages to the public

Some best practice information release guidelines to keep in mind include:

- Establish your organisation as a credible source of information early after the event and keep releasing

Some overarching principles to keep in mind include:

- Be transparent and adaptive
- Trust an informed public to respond intelligently
- Consider what information people need to make informed decisions and steer the

information released towards this

- Accept that you will get things wrong – the speed of information delivery is more critical in the climate social media has created
- Credibility will be lost over time if you do not respond – don't go quiet
- Remember that your use of social media is about creating relationships. Social media are, in their very essence, social and people are expecting a real person to be communicating with them, not a bureaucratic statement being turned out
- It is important to understand that trying to respond to all comments and queries during the response phase is not possible and unnecessary – the community will assist in providing information where possible.



Example

During the Rena 2011 event, the general public's ability to see what was happening on board the Rena was restricted by its location and a three mile exclusion zone. To provide people with detail about what was happening and reduce the number of "rubbernecks", professional photos were taken and posted on the Maritime NZ website and the BOP Regional CV council's Facebook page and proved to be highly popular.

Labelling the reliability of information

For reasons already stated, if you are going to use social media in an emergency it is not a good strategy to delay information release until you receive confirmation. However, this does raise issues for CDEM organisations who are uncomfortable with releasing unverified information. The following guidelines are therefore provided to help mitigate the risks involved:

- Where information is unverified, label it as such (e.g. start the post or tweet with #UNCONFIRMED). Early release makes the community aware that you are aware of the situation and should slow down the rumour mill

- Where applicable, state the source of the information in your post or tweet
- State what action you are taking (e.g. state the information is currently under investigation)
- Consider the importance of the piece of information being addressed – if it is of little significance (e.g. has low implications and/or has only been shared among a handful of people), it does not need to be addressed
- Do not post details or link to information sources that are not credible at any stage.



Information release must be streamlined in emergencies – label the reliability of the information to help mitigate the risks involved

Social media can also be used to confirm information, by requesting specific, required information from community members. Therefore, where appropriate, ask for additional information (e.g. photos) in your posts or tweets.

Once information is confirmed, you simply need to retweet or re-post the official post (e.g. from MCDEM, MetService) in its original format. Where applicable, it may also be beneficial to make use of the #mythbuster hashtag to correct any inaccuracies. Remember, the #mythbuster hashtag should be used to state FACTS (do not state the myth you are busting).

Additional information, pg 48 provides template examples of each of these types of information release your organisation can use as a guide. It also restates key information release principles for ease of reference.

Sign off from the Controller

Streamlining information release processes will create some areas of uncertainty for your organisation. One such query may be: at what level does information need to be signed off by the Controller in the new system?

The following recommendations are made regarding this issue:

- For hard information and facts it is not

necessary to obtain sign off from the Controller

- Where information is sensitive (e.g. based on risk to lives, property, reputation, environment, city leaders or EOC staff) it is important to go back to the Controller
- One strategy to streamline the sign-off process is to create template documents ahead of time (see below for an example)
- Anything sent out from MCDEM or other agencies does not require sign off and can be used by a PIM – of course within context and with due communications risk mitigation applied
- The PIM role has the authority to approve and sign off and then delegate – it is important the PIM liaises with the EOC
- Consider live tweeting from press conferences – the Controller has already agreed to content and statements used during these
- Include a “key public messages from this meeting are...” agenda item at all IMT meetings.



Example

Streamlining sensitive information release

Hutt Valley Emergency Management uses the following information release process:

PRIOR TO AN EMERGENCY:

1. Specific message templates and pre-scripted short messages are created in peace time (e.g. tsunami orange zones to be evacuated)
2. Controller approves

DURING AN EMERGENCY:

3. Intelligence gathered during the response determines which template to use
4. At the IMT meeting:
 - a. Templates are made accessible (e.g. stored on a portable electronic device)
 - b. Messages are edited as required as decisions are made by IMT
 - c. The message is read in the IMT meeting
 - d. Verbal approval is given by the Controller for the message to be released.

Effectively disseminating information

There are a number of strategies you can use to boost the effectiveness of your organisation's use of social media to disseminate information. Some recommendations include:

- Aim to create a cross over between ‘old’ media and ‘new’ media, whereby traditional media sources report directly from social media sources. This will maximise the number of people reached through the single source and reduce workloads
- Use a small number of hashtags for tweets – and make sure those employed are the most common and popular ones. If you need to create a hashtag ensure it is short, relevant, easy and obvious. Monitor popular hashtags being used overtime and adapt as necessary
- Provide information in an accessible format – for example, use machine-readable geocoding as opposed to PDF and use low-bandwidth solutions for download to smart phones (e.g. don't only provide links to other sites with information in posts, the posts themselves must detail relevant information as well)
- Choose the tools you use wisely for the goals and tasks you are trying to achieve (for further information relating to this refer to Table 2)
- Create open access to all emergency data, so others can mashup and contribute to useful services
- Consider the time phase of the emergency when utilising social media and react accordingly.

After an emergency, pg 38 includes a number of measures you can use to assess your organisation's effectiveness at disseminating information.

Rumour log addressing

Members of the online public by and large have good intentions and do not intentionally try to mislead others. However, there will be instances where misinformation is spread online. This is shown in action at the following link: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2011/dec/07/london-riots-twitter>.

Social media has the power to share information among large groups of people, including when this information is inaccurate. However, it can be an equally effective tool for your organisation to use to dispel misinformation, rumours and myths.



Emergency information shared online will generally be accurate - where there are inaccuracies, social media are powerful tools your organisation can employ to address the rumour log

Some key points to consider in the management of misinformation include:

- If you establish yourself as an authoritative source of information early you will have increased ability to dispel myth – start releasing early and regularly update
- It is important that one organisation establishes itself as the lead early and all other organisations are consistent with the authoritative voice
- Remember the community wants to help – if you make them feel valued they will inevitably work for your organisation and make your job easier
- Online information is self-correcting – if it is an insignificant piece of incorrect information (e.g. with low implications attached) you can leave it to the online community to correct.



Example

During the Rena grounding in 2011, Bay of Plenty Regional Council had many questions posted to its Facebook page. Generally, the community did its best to answer in the interim before the Council was able to respond. These answers were generally correct and avoided those involved in the response from getting drawn into online debates.

When you do need to act:

- Act quickly

- Spread information over as many different social media types and sites as possible and encourage others to retweet/share it
- Utilise the #mythbuster hashtag when using Twitter (this is well-established and widely used)
- Cite an official source
- For technical misinformation the use of a correcting video may be effective
- Ensure you address the misinformation at the source where it was first reported
- If possible, contact the source and get them to retract and correct.



Example

On April 16, 2007, a school shooting took place on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. In two separate attacks, approximately two hours apart, 32 people were killed and 25 others were wounded, before the perpetrator committed suicide.

The online events following this horrific attack provide a good example of where social media can have 100% accuracy and validate information faster than official processes during an emergency. The 32 deceased were correctly identified 'informally' across social media sites (including Facebook groups and other sites) before these names were officially released. Further, it was found that not one incorrect name was provided at any stage of the collective problem-solving process.

This therefore challenges widely held assumptions regarding the accuracy of information spread over social media and highlights that this may be less problematic than many in the CDEM sector perceive it to be.



Further reading

Vieweg, S., Palen, L., Liu, S.B., Hughes, A.L. & Sutton, J. (2008). Collective Intelligence in Disaster: An Examination of the Phenomenon in the Aftermath of the 2007 Virginia Tech Shooting. Proceedings of the 5th International ISCRAM Conference, Washington DC, USA, May 2008.

Queensland Police Service. (2011). Disaster management and social media – a case study. Available for download from <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.

Terdiman, D. (2005). Study: Wikipedia as accurate as Britannica. Available online at: http://news.cnet.com/2100-1038_3-5997332.html.

decisions can be made more quickly

- Informing a targeted response by identifying key areas of concern.

Overall, community information will be invaluable to your response, improving its effectiveness and helping to ensure the community is satisfied with what is provided.

Shared community information must first be filtered and aggregated, then validated, prioritised and integrated into the EOC, ensuring the response is effective. The following sections cover this important process.

Monitoring community information

During the response phase, the amount of information shared over social media that is relevant to an effective response may be vast. As such, you will have to make decisions regarding what exactly you will monitor, and you will want these decisions to maximise the quality and helpfulness of information gathered.

Leading on from this:

- It is important to recognise that there are two very different needs for the incoming information within the EOC; that for PIM and that for P&I. It is important P&I recognise the benefit of community shared information for their needs as well
- P&I should clearly communicate to PIM what information they require. It is important to ensure the EOC is not operating in silos. Working in the same physical space is a good first step to take to mitigate this risk. It will then be easier for PIM to share information with others
- It is important to remember you will not be able to monitor and respond to all social media channels – you need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each and prioritise which will be most useful at what phases of the response
- It will be extremely helpful to develop Collection Plans. These are a way to organise and plan out what information will be gathered, and from where, in an event. A simplified example template is provided (pg 33) and the expanded version can be downloaded **here**. Ideally collection plans should address the type of

Information in

Social media has the unique characteristic (compared to traditional media) of allowing for two-way conversation. This is very useful as CDEM organisations can gather more information, more quickly, during the response phase than ever before, including specifically-targeted and requested information.

This section provides strategies and recommendations for how your organisation can most effectively use social media to gather information during the response phase.

The role of community information

The community sharing information has a number of benefits and uses for your EOC, including:

- Improved monitoring of public needs
- Increasing feelings of connectedness among the community and improved relationships between your organisation and the community
- Increased coordination between community groups
- Increasing the speed of your response, as

information required, potential sources of this information, the method and frequency of collection and staff responsibilities. It is important to keep these updated to improve efficiency at shift changes and it may be beneficial for both P&I and PIM to have their own separate collection plans. A key benefit of using a collection plan is that it shows prioritisation decisions you have made and provides justification for these. The second stage of the collection plan is a monitoring template (for an example see [Additional information, pg 49.](#)) It may also be beneficial for these to be part of a collaborative plan with other partner organisations

- Where possible, it is therefore important to get familiar with relevant social media tools and sites before an emergency to streamline monitoring decision making during the response phase.



Example

Key sites monitored during emergency events in New Zealand currently include TradeMe forums and Facebook pages. TradeMe forums often provide more in-depth discussions of issues than other pages, while Facebook pages can provide information on very specific issues from very specific groups (e.g. there may be suburb specific pages)

Managing incoming information

The volume of information shared over social media may create problems for your organisation with regard to how to manage this resource. Planning prior to an event with regard to how incoming information will be managed is therefore beneficial.



It is best that your organisation has methods and processes in place for managing incoming community information shared via social media before an emergency

Following are some recommendations regarding filtering and aggregating incoming information:

- Traditional methods of collating, aggregating and releasing information are also useful for social media information
- You may need to move past the 'we don't have the resources' frame of mind to a more collective and supportive approach where you can bring in expertise as necessary. This requires pre-event planning (e.g. developing clearly defined roles and responsibilities) and commitment from staff outside of the EOC and partner organisations
- Make use of analytic tools – further information regarding these tools is provided below
- Make use of online maps/mashups (e.g. combining information about road closures, portaloos locations, water tanker locations, zones areas, support locations) to make information more easily visualised as a whole
- 'Flag' social media messages in the EOC – identify themes, create a filing mechanism, use consistent hashtags, track the identity of information and create a labelling system for the collation of messages
- Some natural groupings of topics may be apparent from the consistent use of popular hashtags by the public – take advantage of these
- Enable natural social filtering by providing some tools ahead of time to ease posting, searching and monitoring. For example, you can set up Google alerts to email or use filters on HootSuite for keywords for real time results
- It is important to keep in mind legal requirements during this phase (e.g. record-retention)
- P&I and PIM need to work together to ensure intel and PIM information is gathered effectively and provided to P&I in a timely manner
- Use of a monitoring template will aid the organisation of incoming information and is the next step on from your collection plan. [Additional information, pg 49](#) provides an example monitoring template.

Analytic tools

Analytic tools, in the broader context, are used to assist with the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data (such as social media provided information) for the purposes of understanding and optimising web usage.

Table 3: Example Intelligence Collection Plan Matrix

EOC/ECC:	Clareville	Event Name:				Operation Weather Bomb					
For the period from:		Date:	12/05/12	Time:	0630	To:		Date:	12/05/12	Time:	1230

Source:	Welfare centres	Police	Fire Service	Health	Ambulance	Building Inspectors	Council Services	Utility providers	Local Schools	River Monitoring	Group ECC	TradeMe Forums	Twitter	Facebook groups	Social media (other)	Local Media	National Media
Type:																	
Social Service Impact	X			X			X					X		X		X	X
Physical Impact		X	X			X	X	X			X		X			X	X
Utility Impact														X		X	
Roading Impact							X						X			X	
River/Coastal Impact											X				X	X	
Weather forecasts											X						

Prepared by:	Jane Brown – Planning & Intelligence	Date:	12/05/12	Time:	0600
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Note: For initial planning purposes potential sources can be indicated with an **X**. Add or delete types or sources as required.
 For more detailed planning the frequency, timing and/or specific source (abbreviation) can be entered.

They can be an asset in assisting your organisation with managing community information during the response phase. Key effective analytic tools in the emergency management context include:

- Semantic analysis tools (you will need to determine which key areas to monitor to determine the focus of this),
- Sentiment analysis tools (positive or negative as an indicator of message quality),
- Trendsmap, and
- Crowdmapping.

These provide a technological solution to aggregating information as they will automatically gather updates, posts and tweets and categorise these into a database, with a summary report being created.

This technology is free and operates on the volunteer system. There is therefore no financial outlay required, only the necessary time contribution.



Analytic tools can provide an effective technology-based solution to your organisation's information management issues – however these should not be used in isolation

To most effectively use these tools, it's a good idea for your personnel to volunteer during overseas events. This will provide training for personnel within your organisation and help your organisation join the international analytics community. It is also a good idea to ask your organisation's IT/web personnel for assistance.

It is important to note that these technological solutions must be combined with people-based solutions. This will ensure important tweets are captured and responded to which may have been missed if relying on analytic tools alone (e.g. it is not only about the volume of posts on a particular issue – one update about an important issue also needs to be identified and responded to).

Examples of analytic tools you could utilise include: Twistory, Hashtracking, HootSuite Archives and Storify. A wiki of a range of social media monitoring tools (both free and paid) your organisation could

use are available here: <http://wiki.kenburbarry.com/social-media-monitoring-wiki>.

Validating community information

Before community information can be incorporated into the EOC and acted upon, it must first be validated. Strategies for how to best complete this important task include:

- Identify information requiring validation (any information you've shared with the #unconfirmed hashtag is a good starting point)
- Use existing tools of validation where they can meet the need, but consider timeliness issues (e.g. social media works faster than traditional validation processes). Find ways to streamline these existing tools where possible
- Use social media to request specific, required information where appropriate to validate information (e.g. request photographic evidence via Twitter)
- An example post you could make is "We have received information about x,y,z, can anyone confirm this?" (see *Additional information*, pg 48 for further guidance)
- Look for trending topics – the volume of information can provide confirmation and validation for information
- Check other social media sites or accounts that you trust for verification, particularly other agency's sites
- It is important to note that traditional media will often source information from social media and may have a lower standard for validation and verification than CDEM organisations.



Community information can be effectively and relatively easily validated through the use of social media

Integrating community information into the EOC

Another stage of using community information for the response is integrating this information into the EOC. Following are some recommendations regarding how best to achieve this:

- Use pre-existing processes for intelligence gathering if appropriate
- Pre-event planning is required – particularly in relation to organisations working together. It is important to understand each other’s capacity and capability to use social media, have clear roles and responsibilities across organisations and levels of response, use a cross-intelligence hub and foster a culture of information sharing (both within your organisation and between organisations)
- The new EMIS may provide better integration of social media information in the EOC – however, further information and experience with this is required before any specific recommendations can be made
- P&I monitor social media solely for P&I issues and direct common issues/enquiries to the appropriate P&I action groups. Remember that monitoring social media is the same as monitoring radio, television or newspapers (with the exception that the volume of information will be much higher for social media). If P&I communicate what information they require to PIM, PIM can also assist. PIM and P&I need to be integrated – the use of a PIM liaison may help with this
- Identify key issues to monitor each shift/day and communicate these to the web and social media team
- Utilise mash up and mapping technologies to help identify “hot spots” for needed resources (e.g. water, portaloo). Making the information visual rather than text-based is beneficial
- Use analytic tools to identify the main issues that require a response
- Consider projecting summary information and/or running registers of common issues from the community to help trigger the PIM team in developing their key messages and actions and to assist in the sharing of information within the EOC
- Provide regular “snapshot” reports to the Controller
- Ensure key points that require addressing are addressed
- Such integration requires an honest dialogue – in order to address cultural change, resourcing, response structures and vision.



Example

Inside the Christchurch EOC, HootSuite was projected onto a large wall so the whole PIM team (and anyone else entering PIM) could see the flow of information online.

Prioritising community information

Once the information shared over social media is filtered, aggregated and validated, prioritisation decisions must be made. Prioritisation decisions are extremely important to ensuring issues are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. Some important points to consider in the process include:

- The public can assist with prioritising issues. For example, the community assisted in prioritising Portaloo placements during the Christchurch earthquake response
- Prioritisation decisions should be made during regular meetings with key decision makers
- Be adaptive and trust personnel to react as appropriate between meetings
- Streamline processes (e.g. maximise delegation authorities) so personnel can act quickly once an issue of high importance is identified.



Example

During the Christchurch earthquake response, meetings were held every two hours to give decision makers the full picture. Prioritisation decisions were made during these meetings.

Between meetings the strategy was to:

- Respond as quickly as possible
- Make the process transparent
- Trust employees to make decisions
- Maximise the delegation authority.

Providing feedback and closing the loop

Once information has been integrated into the EOC, prioritisation decisions made and actions to take decided based on these, it is important to close the loop and provide feedback to important parties. It will be important to:

- Provide feedback to those monitoring social media – make clear if the information has been helpful and any additional key areas to focus on
- Communicate back to the online community where their information has been used (e.g. thank the community for their assistance) and where information has not been used (with explanation of why this has occurred) – this will help with building trust between your organisation and the community by showing community groups they are valued and are making a difference.

After an emergency

After and emergency: Some quick tips

After the emergency (response phase) is completed there are some steps your organisation can take to both foster the recovery phase and improve performance for any future events by evaluating the success of your initiatives.

To foster the recovery phase, it is important to continue to monitor and maintain sites, albeit to a lesser degree than during the response phase. Any issues not dealt with during the response phase or arising later in the piece will then be identified and responded to as required.

When evaluating the success of your initiatives, it is important to think back to the original goals of your social media use and measure success against these objectives. How well you achieved the goals you originally set when you chose to engage in social media is the most important marker of success, rather than the success of your social media initiatives per se.



Measuring the success of your initiatives is important during the recovery phase and such success should be measured against how well you achieved your original goals

Therefore, some markers of success for your organisation may include (but are not limited to):

- Reach (e.g. number of retweets, shares, queries)
- Information timeliness or query response speed
- Number of myths dispelled/inaccurate information corrected
- Proportions of positive/negative feedback from the community
- How well you linked with other organisations
- The number of people provided with timely information regarding medical, food, water and shelter resources
- How well your social media initiatives encouraged wanted behaviours and discouraged unwanted behaviours (e.g. avoidance of Tsunami risk zones)

- How well you stuck to your original plans and boundaries (e.g. remained passive if that was your plan)
- Your number of followers (it is also important to consider who exactly is following you as a measure of influence, for example, percentage in your region, percentage of media followers)
- The number of people citing your messages or channels as the place to go
- Number of other organisations using your messages
- How coordinated/consistent/integrated your social media activity was with your website and other information release outlets (e.g. radio, television).

Several steps you can therefore take to measure the success of your initiatives and improve your organisation's performance in future events include:

- Maintain good records of your response via social media, including key learnings of what went well and what didn't go so well (e.g. what to avoid in the future) and new information at hand (e.g. details of new contacts)
- Survey the online community for feedback on the response including how helpful they found the information to be and areas needing improvement, as well as possible strategies to overcome these in the future – this can be through the use of a structured survey or more informally
- Measure (through the use of tracker applications, for example) quantifiable factors such as the number of shares of your messages, feedback on messages, other organisations using your messages etc.



Running a survey is an excellent way to obtain feedback from the community, evaluate the success of your social media initiatives and improve your response to future events

It is then important to:

- Ensure key information is made accessible for future events (include across organisations)
- Make required changes to policies and processes based on learnings
- Debrief all relevant personnel regarding key learnings and ask for additional insights.

It is important to remember that the success of your social media usage (e.g. number of people reached) is irrelevant if your management of the emergency was unsuccessful. It is possible for social media to be more successful than the response itself.



Further reading

Dabner, N. (2012). 'Breaking Ground' in the use of social media: A case study of a university earthquake response to information educational design with Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 15(1), pp. 69-78.

Department of Internal Affairs. (2011). *Social media in Government: Hands-on toolbox*. Department of Internal Affairs: Wellington. Available for download from: <http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/hands-on-toolbox/>.

Chavez, C., Repas, M.C. & Stefaniak, T.L. (2010). *A new way to communicate with residents: Local government use of social media to prepare for emergencies*. An ICMA Report. ICMA: Washington.

Additional information

Glossary

- **Analytic tools:** Analytic tools are used to assist with the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data (e.g. information shared over social media) for the purposes of optimising web usage. They can be an asset to your organisation for managing incoming community information during the response phase.
- **App:** an application that performs a specific function on a computer or hand-held device.
- **Bitly:** This is a URL shortening device. It's especially popular on Twitter because attached URLs use up less characters in a tweet.
- **Blogger:** a free weblog publishing tool from Google for sharing text, photos and video.
- **Collection Plan:** a systematic process for collecting and organising information. Such plans provide an ordered way to collect and record information. An example Collection Plan is provided in Table 3.
- **Crowdsourcing:** refers to the process of harnessing the skills of online communities or organisations that are prepared to volunteer their time contributing content or skills and solving problems.
- **Facebook:** the most popular social networking tool in the Western world. Allows users to create profiles and connect with other people, communities and organisations.
- **Flickr:** an online photo management and sharing tool.
- **Google+:** a relatively new social networking site.
- **Google Alerts:** email updates of the latest relevant Google results, based on nominated topics or key words.
- **Hashtag:** these are a tool for grouping together tweets into various topics. Examples include #chch or #eqnz. Hashtags make it a lot easier for people to follow relevant information on a particular topic. In general, you should adopt whatever hashtag is already being used. If you do need to create a hashtag, ensure it is short, relevant, easy and obvious (e.g. for an earthquake in Wellington an appropriate hashtag could be #eqwelly).
- **HootSuite:** a social media management system that allows you to connect to multiple social networks from one website.
- **Hootsuite Archives:** an archiving service (e.g. for record retention) provided within HootSuite.
- **Mashup:** this term refers to the process of aggregating or combining up information from multiple social media sites and sources into one place. Tools such as Ushahidi summarise shared information in this way. Tools such as this make the task of monitoring incoming information much easier.
- **MySpace:** an online social network allowing more flexibility in profiles than other sites (e.g. allows users to create an original look for their profile page).
- **New Zealand Herald:** the upper North Island's most popular social news site (allows users to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on the content).
- **Open source:** software for which the source code is freely available and modifiable.
- **Pinterest:** an online "pinboard" that allows the user to organise and share sites, photos and videos on the internet.
- **Post:** a statement or comment made on a social media site.
- **Reach:** number of people who engage with, share or see your posts.
- **Retweet (RT):** this refers to the process of resending a tweet, in its original form, to the re-sender's followers. Encouraging retweeting is an excellent way to widely spread information throughout the community.
- **RSS feed:** Really Simple Syndication – allows you to subscribe to content on blogs and other social media and have it delivered through a feed.
- **Stuff:** the most popular social news site in New Zealand (allows users to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on the content).
- **Subscribable:** any site that allows users to subscribe to the content (e.g. through an RSS feed). Once a user subscribes they will generally receive notifications of new content.
- **Tags:** keywords added to a blog post, photo or video to help users find related topics or media. These are similar to 'hashtags' used on Twitter.
- **TradeMe:** New Zealand's most popular auctions, classifieds and community discussion forum site.
- **Tweet:** a tweet is a text-based post sent over

Twitter. Tweets have a 140 character limit.

- Tweetdeck: a social media management system that allows you to connect to multiple social networks from one website
- Twitter: an online social networking and microblogging service. Allows users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters (known as 'tweets').
- yFrog: an image hosting image service that allows users to share their photos and videos on Twitter.
- YouTube: the most popular video-sharing website, allowing users to upload, view and share videos.
- WikiHow: a web-based and wiki-based community, consisting of an extensive database of how-to guides.
- Wikipedia: a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit.
- WordPress: a free and open source blogging tool.



Further reading

More detailed social media glossaries are available at:

<http://socialmedia.wikispaces.com/A-Z+of+social+media>

<http://www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary/>

http://thesocialmediaguide.com/social_media/social-media-glossary

Checklist: Actions to take before an emergency

- Decide at what level your organisation will engage in Social Media (SM) (pg 5)
- Get familiar with the types of SM available (and tasks each tool is best suited to) (pg 9)
- Create a SM strategy (through consultation with relevant staff members) (pg 15)
- Develop policy for the streamlining of information release during the response phase (if applicable) (pg 18)
 - Include guidance for labelling unconfirmed information being released (pg 27)
- Develop policy for the staffing of SM and appropriate use of SM for employees (pg 16)
- Develop policy for the management of gathered information in the response phase (pg 18)
- Develop guidelines for the design of sites (if applicable) (pg 19)
- Get familiar with your legal obligations and make appropriate provisions, including for
 - Copyright (pg 19)
 - Privacy (pg 19)
 - Comment guidelines for the public (if applicable) (pg 19)
 - Record-retention (pg 20)
- Get an adequate number of staff involved and trained (pg 5 & 6)
- Amend existing training programmes with SM content as appropriate (pg 16)
- Engage with varying types of SM technologies (pg 9)
- Begin to monitor popular sites where conversations are taking place (pg 9)
- Set up sites (if applicable) (pg 9)
- Begin to build your online presence and trust with your community (if applicable) (pg 21)
- Begin to share relevant information on sites (if applicable) (pg 20)
- Begin to interact with your online community (if applicable) (pg 21)
- Begin to build relationships with other key CDEM organisations (pg 20)
- Create contacts with key search engine operators (if applicable) (pg 20)
- Run pre-event tests of your use of SM (pg 16)

Checklist: Actions to take during an emergency

- Remember to be adaptive
- Follow your pre-developed plans, procedures, protocols and policies (or alternatively, create necessary plans and policies) (pg 15)
- Keep in mind your legal obligations and ensure these are met (pg 19)
- Investigate ways to maximise the resources available to you and implement these, where necessary and appropriate (pg 24)
- Create and/or maintain strong links with other organisations and community groups (pg 25)
- Take steps to build and maintain trust with your online community (if applicable) (pg 25)
- If you are using SM to disseminate information (pg 26):
 - Consider community expectations and (a) tailor your response to meet these where appropriate or (b) act to address unrealistic expectations (pg 26)
 - Establish your organisation as a credible source of information early after the event and keep releasing (pg 27)
 - Point to existing sources of official information where this is beneficial. Do not point to sources of information that are not credible at any stage (pg 27)
 - Streamline the release of information – including through the use of templates and through labelling the reliability of information (pg 27 & 48)
 - Consider what information the public needs to make informed decisions and steer the information released towards this (pg 27)
 - Don't go quiet (pg 27)
 - Make use of the #mythbuster hashtag where appropriate (pg 27 & 29)
 - Obtain sign-off from the Controller for sensitive information, streamlining this process where possible (pg 28)
 - For Twitter, ensure popular hashtags are adopted and any that you do create are simple, short, relevant and obvious (pg 29)
 - Where appropriate, name the source of your information (pg 48)
 - Encourage sharing of messages among your online community (pg 27)
 - Consider the risk reward benefit cost of releasing information and of shared misinformation (e.g. allow the community to self-correct where possible) (pg 27)

Checklist: Actions to take during an emergency cont.

- In relation to monitoring/managing incoming information (pg 31):
 - Ensure P&I communicate clearly to PIM what information they require (pg 31)
 - Develop a Collection Plan detailing what sources of information will be monitored and for what types of information (pg 31)
 - Utilise traditional methods of collating, aggregating and releasing information where appropriate (pg 32)
 - Utilise a monitoring template to aggregate and summarise gathered information (pg 49)
 - Make use of analytic tools – ensure these are combined with people-based solutions (pg 32)
 - Make use of online map/mashup tools to make information more easily visualised as a whole (pg 32)
- To validate community information (pg 34):
 - Identify what information requires validation
 - Use existing validation tools where appropriate, considering timeliness issues
 - Ask the community for additional information to confirm or contradict unconfirmed, important incoming information
 - Look to other trusted information sources for validating
- To integrate community information into the EOC (pg 34)
 - Use pre-existing processes where appropriate
 - Consider projecting summary information and/or running registers of common issues onto a wall to help PIM team identify key actions
 - Utilise mashup technologies to identify “hot spot” areas needing resources
 - Ensure key factors that need to be addressed are addressed
- To prioritise community information (pg 35)
 - Look to the community for guidance
 - Hold regular prioritisation meetings
 - Maximise delegation authorities so personnel can act quickly when needed
- Provide feedback regarding the helpfulness of incoming information to those monitoring SM sources and the community (pg 36)

Checklist: Actions to take after an emergency

- Continue to monitor and maintain sites, but to a lesser degree than during the response phase
- Respond to new issues/queries as required
- Consider the original goals you set for your use of SM and list out your markers of success based on these (some example markers are listed in [After an emergency, pg 38](#))
- Create detailed records of your response via SM including key learnings of what went well as what didn't go so well
- Survey the online community for feedback on the response (through use of a structured survey or more informally) (if applicable)
- Measure (through the use of tracker applications, for example) quantifiable factors that provide an indication of your success (if applicable)
- Make key information accessible for future events (including across organisations)
- Make required changes to policies and processes based on learnings
- Debrief all relevant personnel

Templates

Templates: Monitoring of information

Organising incoming social media information into a useable format may be difficult during the response phase. The following page provides an example monitoring template that your organisation can use as a start point (adapted from the template Environment Canterbury used during the Canterbury earthquakes). Some example topics are filled in, as well as further information regarding how to fill it out.

The monitoring information template is the next step from your collection plan (which plans out what information you are going to collect and from where). The monitoring template records the actual information you receive from these sources. Again, P&I and PIM integration is important in the development and effective use of your monitoring template. As with the collection plan, your monitoring template should be updated frequently, with key trends and other topics changing with the natural flow of information.

Templates: Information release and alerts

Example templates for alerts and information release are provided below. In line with Wellington Emergency Management's (WEMO) Social Media Policy (v 4), it is recommended any approved templates are maintained in the phones of authorised social media users within your organisation. Highlighted sections should be replaced with appropriate information on the day. Remember that all messages need to remain less than 140 characters to be posted on Twitter, unless additional applications to increase the permitted length are used (information on such apps is available [here](#)).

Earthquake in XXX. Investigating #tsunami threat to NZ. Tune to radio for update. #wellington

#UNCONFIRMED: Reports of #XXX Rd closed from XXX to XXX due to #flooding. Tune to radio for update. #wellington

#Flooding: Can anyone confirm road closure at

#XXX rd? Send pix #wellington

#MYTHBUSTER: #Auckland harbour bridge IS OPEN both directions #Tornado

Key information release principles include:

- Release information quickly to make the community aware that you are aware of the situation (including when it is unverified)
- Consider the importance of the piece of information being addressed – if it is of little significance, it does not need to be addressed
- Where information is unverified, label it as such (with a #unconfirmed hashtag)
- Where applicable, state the source of the information
- Do not post details or link to information sources that are not credible at any stage. Do point to existing helpful sources of official information where appropriate
- Always include hashtags for the location/city/area your post is in relation to. Remember you can use multiple hashtags where appropriate and characters permit
- Always include the hashtag of the emergency event you are referring to
- Ensure any hashtags used are simple and easy to understand. Where there is already an established hashtag, adopt it
- Where appropriate, request confirmatory/contradictory information (e.g. pictures) from community members in the area
- Provide ranges rather than specifics in messages (e.g. power out to 10-30% of the city) – this will have less negative consequences for public perceptions of the reliability of authoritative sources of information where inaccuracies do occur
- RT official information where ever possible (e.g. MCDEM for Tsunami, MetService for weather)
- When using the #mythbuster hashtag, always state facts and highlight key points using caps. Do not state the myth you are busting as this will confuse those who receive the message. The #mythbuster hashtag is most appropriate to use in relation to incorrect information that is frequently being shared/retweeted/cited
- Update information as regularly as possible
- Encourage community members to share messages (e.g. retweet, re-post) to increase your reach.

Monitoring Information template

Type of information	Frequency of comments	Channel	Required response (if applicable)
Trends			
Concern over liquefaction	High	Paste links of information source(s)	Document your response (if applicable) in this column
Trauma treatment for children	Medium		Provided link to appropriate information on identified sites
Twitter topics			
Unhappiness with cordons	Rank by number of comments	Paste in appropriate hashtags and/or usernames	Referred to appropriate team to start education campaign re: importance of cordons
Paste in relevant tweets	Where possible, give actual numbers		
	Use a high, medium, low estimate when too difficult		
TradeMe message boards			
Hot water cylinder problems	High	Paste links to relevant discussions	Provided link to further information
Areas with/without water	Medium		Used mythbuster tweet to correct inaccuracies and posted response in discussion feed
Transferring schools	Low		
News sites			
Google tool helps find quake victims		Paste links to relevant stories	
Blogs			
Media trauma		Paste links to relevant blogs	
Looking for lost pets			
You Tube			
Media channels		Paste links to relevant clips	
Flickr			
Damage gallery		Paste links to relevant galleries	

Useful resources

- **A-Z of social media.** Available online at: <http://socialmedia.wikispaces.com/A-Z+of+social+media>.
- **Disaster management and social media – a case study.** Queensland Police Service. (2011). Available for download from: <http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Resources/Internet/services/reportsPublications/documents/QPSSocialMediaCaseStudy.pdf>.
- **Emergency 2.0 Wiki. (Australia).** Available online at: <http://emergency20wiki.org/>
- **PTSC Online: Project to advance crisis and emergency communications.** Cloutier, P. & Radford, B. (2011). Available for download from: <http://www.ptsc-online.ca/blogs/crisisemergencycommunications/ourprojectscompendium>.
- **Social media handbook for Red Cross field units. American Red Cross. (2009).** Available for download from: <http://www.slideshare.net/wharman/social-media-handbook-for-red-cross-field-units>.
- **Social media helping emergency management: Final report. NGIS Australia. (2009).** Available for download from: <http://gov2.net.au/files/2009/12/Project-14-Final-Report.doc>.
- **Social media in an Emergency: Developing a Best Practice Guide Literature Review. Rive, G., Thomas, J., Hare, J. & Nankivell, K. (2012).** Available for download from: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/social-media/>
- **Social media glossary.** Available online at: <http://www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary/>.
- **Social media in Government: Hands-on toolbox. Department of Internal Affairs. (2011).** Available for download from: <http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/hands-on-toolbox/>.
- **Social media in Government: High-level guidance. Department of Internal Affairs. (2011).** Available for download from: <http://webstandards.govt.nz/guides/strategy-and-operations/social-media/high-level-guidance/>.
- **Social media in local Government. ALGIM (NZ).** Available online at: <http://www.algim.org.nz/socialmedia/>
- **The social media guide.** Available online at: <http://thesocialmediaguide.com/social-media/social-media-glossary>.
- **Use of social media in crisis communication. Kortom (Belgium).** Available online at: http://www.kortom.be/file_uploads/5069.pdf.
- **Wiki of Social Media Monitoring Solutions.** Available online at: <http://wiki.kenburbarry.com/social-media-monitoring-wiki>

Contacts

Trade Me

Email: mediaenquiries@trademe.co.nz
Media Line: (04) 803 2601
Customer Service Line: 0900 87 233
Link to become a member (to enable viewing and posting on the message board):
<http://www.trademe.co.nz/Community/MessageBoard/Default.aspx>

Google

Google Crisis Response Team
Anthony Baxter, Google Australia
Email: arb@google.com
Website: <http://www.google.org/crisisresponse/>

Important information

