



Social Media in School Emergency Management

**Using New Media Technology to Improve
Emergency Management Communications**

Presentation Goals

- Provide an understanding of the benefits and challenges associated with employing Social Media technologies in school emergency management.
- Present steps on how to integrate these new communication tools into a school district's current emergency management communications plans, policies and procedures.



Presentation Goals (cont'd.)

- Illustrate promising practices in utilizing Social Media during all four phases of emergency management:



Presentation Structure

- What is Social Media?
- Should schools engage in Social Media?
- Considerations for:
 - Goals and objectives
 - Policies and issues
 - Necessary resources
- Description of Social Media tools and how to use them in a crisis.



What are Social Media?

- ***Social Media (SM)*** are networking sites, messaging sites, texting, and other web-based or mobile technologies that support social interaction.
 - Facebook is by far the most widely used social networking site.
 - Twitter is by far the most widely used messaging site.
 - YouTube is the most widely used video sharing site.



How are Schools Using Social Media for Crisis Communications?

- Provide notifications for school dismissals and closures
- Post status information during an emergency
- Receive status information during an emergency
- Disseminate safety information, news alerts, health alerts
- Communications during full-scale exercise
- Post reunification protocols



Why are Schools Using Social Media for Crisis Communications?

- “Our Twitter presence was particularly helpful during wildfires in the fall. We were able to monitor the rapidly changing situation and keep followers notified of implications for our schools and buses.”
 - *Boulder Valley School District*
- “Social media allows you to get information out fast while buying valuable time before you have to get in front of the media with details of the event. The feedback on our use of social media has been very positive.”
 - *Jefferson County Schools*



- Should schools and/or districts enter the Social Media world?

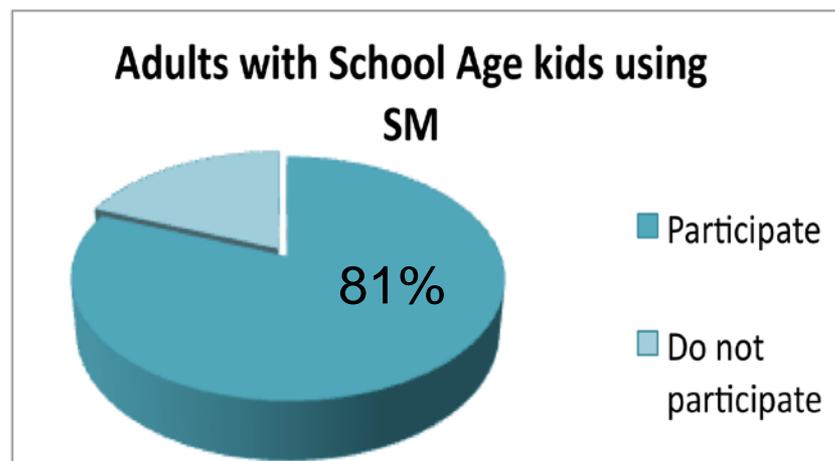
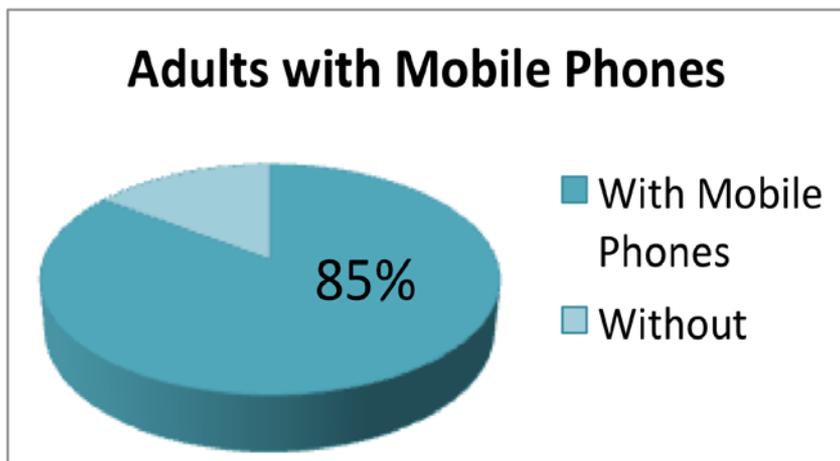


Schools can use Social Media before, during and after a crisis to...

- Add redundancy to current communications networks.
- Allow for more direct and timely dissemination of information to parents especially on mobile devices.
- Establish a system of rapid communication to the broader community and the press.
- Eliminate the press as a filter.



Are Families Using Social Media and Hand-held Communications?

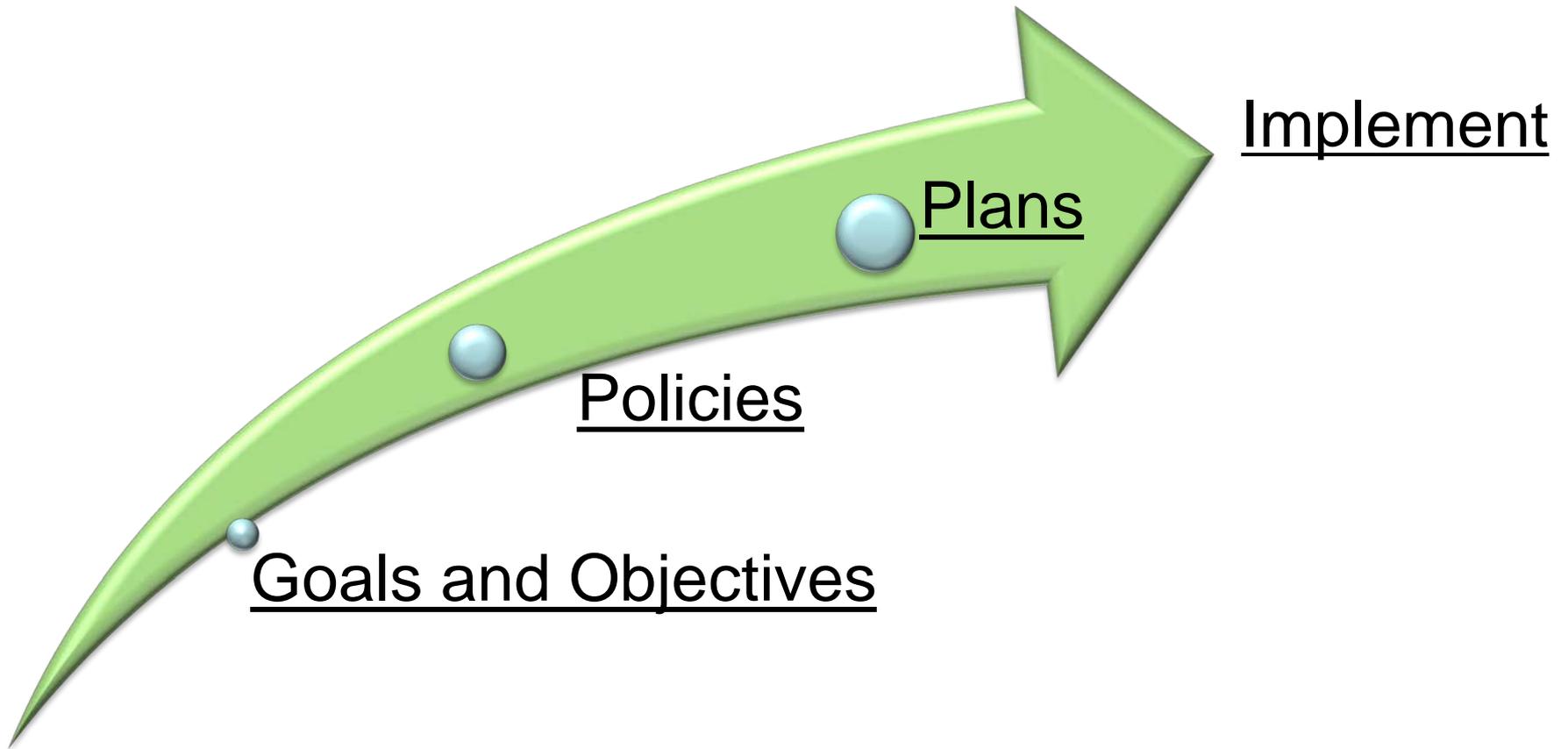


- ✓ **96% of young adults ages 18-29 own a cell phone of some kind.**
- ✓ **73% of online teens (age 12-17) use social networking sites.**
- ✓ **Teens from lower income families are MORE likely to use online social networks (4 in 5)**

Source: Pew Research Center, Oct. 2010



Think before you leap, determine...



Goals and Objectives

For successful implementation, *goals and objectives* are key:

Determine and describe:

- How Social Media will complement your school's current communications' strategy.
- What types of information you want to provide.
- What types of information you might receive.
- Markers of success.



Policy Considerations

- Who will deliver messages: schools, district or both?
- Who will be responsible to clear or remove content posted on sites?
- Who will be allowed to contribute non-crisis information?
- Comment policies need to be spelled out and posted.
- Information feedback mechanisms need to be included.



1. Who will deliver messages: schools, district or both?

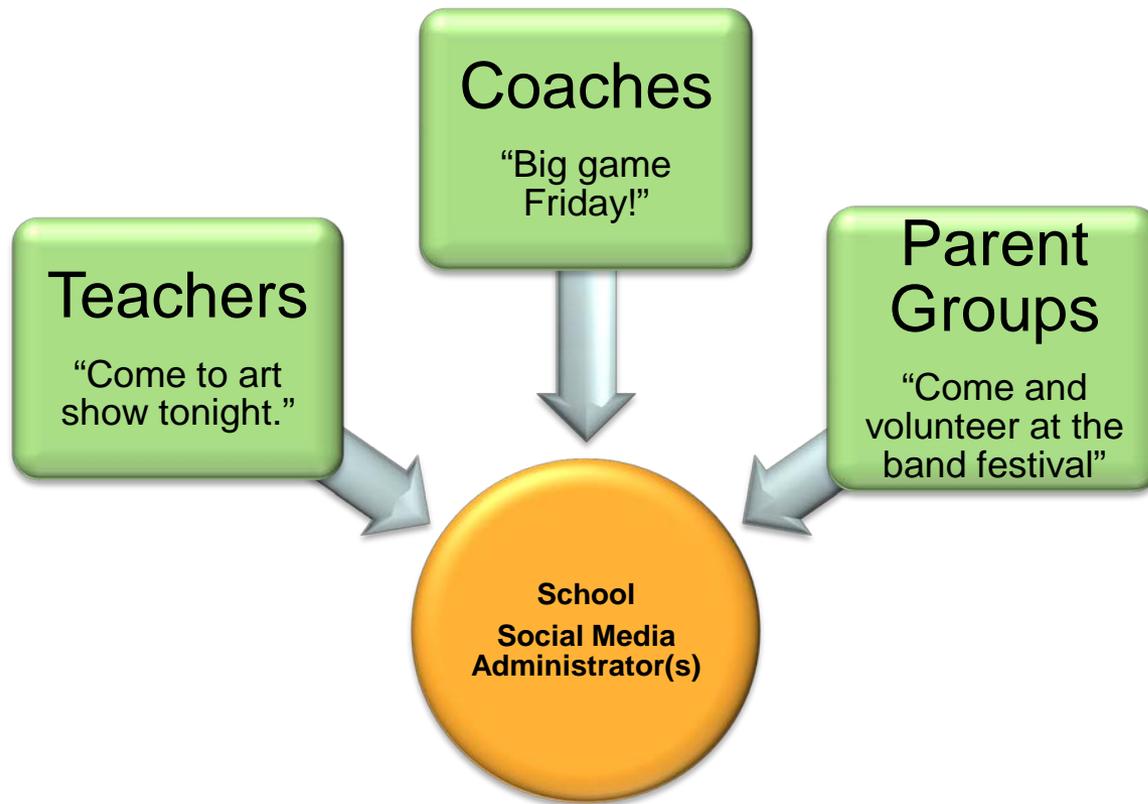
The roles at the school and district levels in utilizing Social Media should be clearly defined.

2. Who will be responsible to clear or remove content posted on sites?

This is an important procedure to have in place, and should be consistent with procedures involving approval of crisis communications generally.



3. How will use of Social Media for crisis communications co-exist with non-emergency use of these tools?



4. Prominently post comment policies.



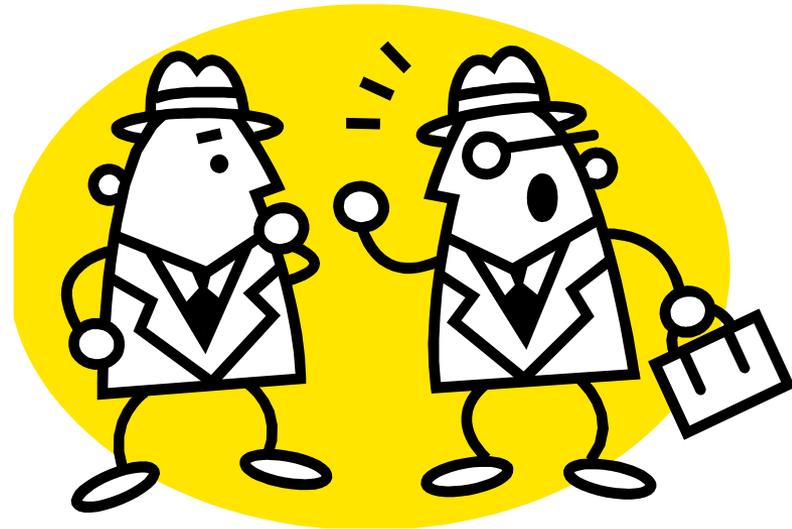
See example from
[Hutchinson Public Schools](#)

- Social Media is...**social**, you won't like every comment.
- Specify:
 - When/what comments will be deleted.
 - What personal data will and will not be posted.
 - Behavior you expect from students and parents on your sites.
 - Remember, Facebook (and many other social networking sites) can only be used by students over the age of 13.



Review Example Policies

- CDC's policy -- comments will be deleted that contain:
 - Hate speech
 - Profanity
 - Nudity
 - Defamation
 - Name calling
 - Spam

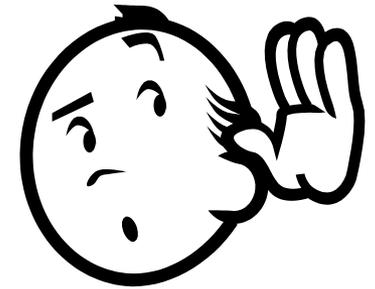


<http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Tools/CommentPolicy.html>



5. Information feedback: determine how to *listen*.

Comments and information posted on Social Media networks, such as Twitter, during a crisis are important for several reasons. They can:



1. Inform school/district of otherwise unknown problems.
2. Point out holes in information being provided to the public.
3. Provide situational awareness information during an unfolding event.

Ensure plans and procedures provide a feedback mechanism to ensure relevant information gets to school administrators and the incident commander.



Planning to Use Social Media

Plan: decide *which* tools you will employ and *when*.

- Which tools best suit your needs?
 - Choose a social network (Facebook), a messaging site (Twitter), broadcast texting, a blog, a video sharing site, or all of the above.
- Whichever tools you choose, employ them **before** a crisis.
- Why?
 - Staff familiarity
 - Community familiarity



Planning to Use Social Media (cont'd)

Consider use and resource needs for all four phases of school emergency management.



Planning to Use Social Media: Mitigation and Preparedness

Write standard operating procedures: be sure to address...

Does more than one person know the passwords?

Who is keeping track of comments and feedback?

Who will send messages through SM daily?

Are the tools used to communicate *Continuity of Education* information (e.g. “Great documentary on PBS tonight”)?

Who is/are the pre-designated Public Information Officer(s) and who is/are the back-ups?



Seek Out Promising Practices

 Joplin Schools
March 30

April 3 Bond Request – Student / Community Safe Rooms

Do you have questions about student / community safe rooms? Watch this two-minute video to learn more.



Like · Comment · Share

 2

 4 people like this.

 View all 7 comments

- Take advantage of multiple platforms
- Integrate video and visual content
- Invite discussion



Seek Out Promising Practices



CRESA (Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency) Halloween Safety Tips from the Vancouver Police Department as shared by the City of Vancouver, WA



Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency: Halloween Safety Tips

cresa911.blogspot.com

Friday at 10:02am · Comment · Like

Provide Interesting Content:

- Seasonal safety tips
- Preparedness games to involve families

“Provide planned, timely, and resourceful information...drivel leads to people blocking your content, or unfriending/unfollowing you.”

- Tuscaloosa City Schools Public Relations Coordinator



Planning to Use Social Media: Response

During an emergency, people will seek information wherever they can find it. You will want to be timely; therefore, you will need resources to...

1. Ensure Incident Command System (ICS) is followed and all communications are cleared through incident commander.
2. Respond quickly to public's questions (or they will seek information elsewhere).
3. Monitor SM to determine what others are saying about the event.



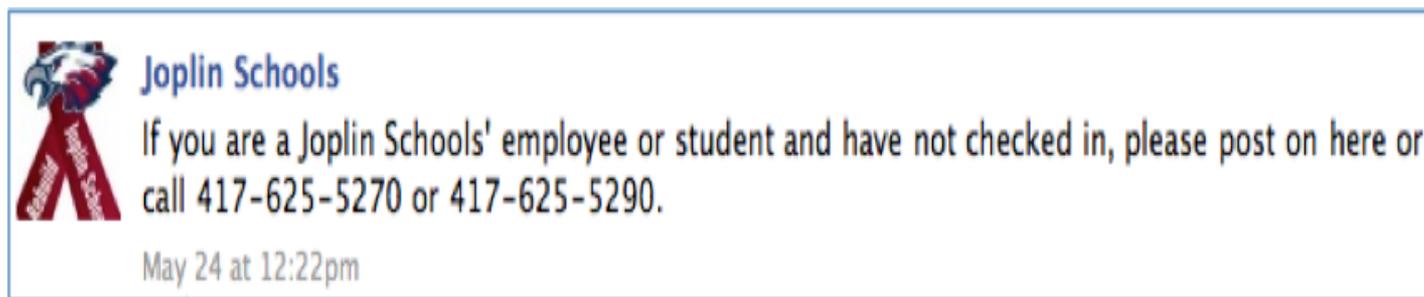
Tuscaloosa City Schools

Three of our school sites were damaged in the tornado yesterday. Alberta Elementary was leveled and University Place Elementary and Middle Schools were severely damaged. The football field and field house at Central High School were also damaged. Lesley Brinton, our coordinator of public relations, will be keeping you up-to-date on the situation.



Social Media During a Response

- “After the tornado our facebook page became our primary and only reliable means of communication. Our website and email were down for a week.” - *Joplin, Missouri Public Schools*



- “Due to the January winter storm that closed schools for one week, the number of Facebook subscribers jumped from approximately 500 to more than 5,000 in three days as students and parents learned that it carried up-to-the-minute weather closings.”
- *Fulton County Schools*



Information Flow During Response: Other Considerations

**Check with local emergency management agencies:
Do they use Social Media during crisis events?**

No



If no, ensure they understand that your organization will be posting information, cleared by lead PIO, to public platforms.

Yes



If yes, ensure you are posting information that does not contradict content posted by response organizations. Coordinate with lead PIO as much as possible.



Planning to Use Social Media: Recovery

Continue to monitor and respond to traffic on all sites.

Use Social Media for ***information dissemination*** during Recovery Phase

■ **Examples:**

1. Re-opening procedures
2. Temporary relocation information
3. Crisis counseling information
4. Information on how the community can help



Tuscaloosa City Schools

Westlawn Middle School will be open at 2pm so that UPMS teachers can get situated in their 'new' school. Please pass the word. Volunteers needed!!!!



Using Social Networks for Recovery

Being able to connect, aids recovery.

Thank volunteers and include images.

Tuscaloosa City Schools added 7 new photos to the album Volunteers at SHEC preparing for University Place Elementary.



Volunteers at SHEC preparing for University Place Elementary

May 1 at 11:06pm · Share

 **Boulder Fire Help**



Pictures

September 10 at 10:38pm · Share

6 people like this.

 I agree - you are amazing. Please bring the firefighters what they need.....
September 11 at 1:34am · Flag

 **Boulder Fire Help** We continue to be a backup source for water for the firefighters and vonunteers. I received a phone call this morning re: a drop locations for the firefighters. They are still collecting undergarmets, socks, chapstick, toothbrushes/paste, and back packs. The drop off is near Rags and Blockbuster off of 28th street, just south of Iris. I will try to get more information.
September 11 at 1:09pm · Flag

Community is encouraged to participate in recovery.



Social Media Implementation: Building a Community

- Successful Social Media implementation requires building a community of participants (e.g. “friends” on Facebook and “followers” on Twitter).
- Building this community requires an initial campaign and ongoing effective use of Social Media applications and tools.



Three Popular Social Media Tools and Platforms: SMS Text Messaging

1. SMS Text Messaging Service

140 character message that can be sent and received on a mobile device.

These messages can be pre-scripted.



Pros:

1. Reaches parents wherever they are.
2. On smart phones, text is visible on top of other applications.
3. Can easily accommodate multiple languages.

Cons:

1. SMS can be delivered through a private company and could be expensive.
2. People have to sign up to receive alerts necessitating an awareness campaign.
3. There is no two-way communication.



SMS Text “How To”

Research companies (or even free services) that provide SMS Text software.



Purchase and install software and train staff on use and policies.



Implement awareness campaign for staff and parents to encourage stakeholders to sign-up.



Test system on a regular schedule.



Using SMS Text to Mitigate Risk

Crisis communications can go two ways.

Fight fire with fire: allow students to report cyber-bullying (or any other kind of bullying or potential violence) through text messages.



Students send anonymous reports.

Students may be more open to sending semi-anonymous messages to schools through text messaging.



Schools can send information.

There are free systems, such as ***FrontlineSMS Bullyproof*** that help schools address this problem.



Three Popular Social Media Methods and Platforms: Micro-Blogging

2. Micro-Blogging

Form of blogging that allows users to send brief (140 characters or less) to a website that aggregates these messages for viewing.



- Messages can be submitted through text messages, mobile websites or through the site hosting the blog.
- This is not a social network, but rather a broadcast forum.
- People are not “friends” but “followers”.

Twitter artwork by <http://lazycrazy.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d2gwla8>



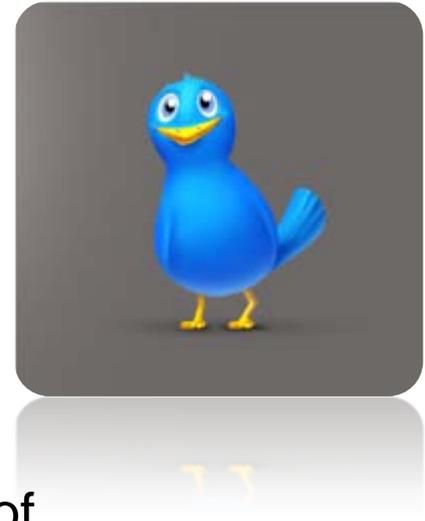
Pros and Cons of Micro-Blogging

Pros:

1. Accounts are free and easy to use.
2. News organizations monitor these sites after a crisis.
3. Easy way to monitor and sort weather and local fire/emergency response information (or other topics of interest).

Cons:

1. There are a smaller number of subscribers to this format than others.
2. It does require trained staff/policies and procedures.



Twitter artwork by <http://lazycrazy.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d2gwla8>



Micro-Blog “How -To”

How to use Twitter during a crisis.

Use hashtags as a way for public to track information.

Direct public/media to website if applicable. URL should be shortened.



Retweet relevant information others provide.

@ symbol is simply the address of the entity you are retweeting.



Posting School Closure Information on Twitter

All after school activities for Friday are cancelled or rescheduled.

12:58 PM Feb 3rd via web

All campuses and offices will be closed Friday, Feb. 4, 2011 due to inclement weather.

12:58 PM Feb 3rd via web

Buses will pick up riders one hour earlier than the regular dismissal time.

7:45 PM Feb 2nd via web

All campuses will have early dismissal Thu, Feb. 3, 2011 due to inclement weather. Each campus will dismiss students one hour early.

7:45 PM Feb 2nd via web



Three Popular Social Media Methods and Platforms: Social Networking

3. Social Networking Sites (such as Facebook)



- Public site where information can be posted, from bake sales to crisis communications.
- There are several social networking sites, but currently Facebook is the most popular with over 700 million users world-wide.
- A “Fan Page” can be established with more user control features and users will not need accounts to see postings.



Pros and cons of using social networks

Pros:

1. Sites are free, easy to use and customizable.
2. Increasingly used by every level of government: from the State Department to local emergency management agencies.
3. Can send out mass messages with no limit to number of “fans” who can view it.
4. Can publish updates remotely.

Cons:

1. Sites are public...so are comments.
2. Sites will need to be monitored.
3. Designated administrators have to have their own personal page.



Social Networks: Facebook Example 1

 **DC Public Schools**
April 19

Hey everyone, dc.gov websites are currently down. The IT staff is actively working to address the issue. Should you need to contact DCPS central office, you can tweet, Facebook, text or email us.

You could probably also call us too at 202.442.5885.

Your local schools and their websites are unaffected.

Like · Comment · Share



Write a comment...

 **DC Public Schools** updated their cover photo.
April 16



Social Networks
provide
alternate/redundant
mode of
communication when
other systems are
down...even when
there is not a crisis.



Social Networks: Facebook Example 2



After a crisis people will ask how they can help. Social networks can help direct people to where they can donate.



Mobile Twitter and Facebook Tips

Posting and monitoring remotely:



There are *many* applications that allow you to update all of your networks remotely, and receive text messages when your organization is mentioned.

Examples: Ping.fm, Gist, TweetPo.st
Seismic Desktop, Smart Twitter for Pages.

Go to sites such as mashable.com for reviews to determine which is best for you.



Monitoring Social Media

An accident has occurred. How do you monitor what people are saying?

To monitor Social Media and news you can:

1. Set up event hashtag on Twitter so others adopt its usage.

#busaccidentMD

Monitor this hashtag using an app such as “Tweetdeck”.

2. Set up **Google Alerts** to send you email updates “as it happens” each time information, based on key words, is posted.
3. Subscribe to Twitter “Search Results” for information to be sent directly to you.



Monitoring (cont'd)

Use a Dashboard:

Dashboards allow you to put newspapers, blogs, weather, email, search, videos, photos, social networks, podcasts, widgets all in one page. These platforms can be public, and they can be accessed on a mobile device.

3. iGoogle

4. Addict-o-matic

5. Netvibes site



Common Mistakes

1. Content is not updated in a timely manner.
2. Content provided during the Prevention-Mitigation and Preparedness phases is not engaging and is therefore ignored.
3. Content is not integrated with other school information (a site devoted solely to emergency information might not attract users).
4. Comments on sites are not monitored by staff and go unanswered.
5. Content is not updated frequently enough to be current and useful.



Interactive Activity



- Scenario: Your town has severe weather in the area and **HomeTown ISD** has made the decision to send students home early. However, the weather approaches too quickly and students have to be sheltered-in-place. One student slips, lands awkwardly and breaks his arm.
- An ambulance is now on its way to the school through town. People in the community are aware there's a situation and you are starting to get a few panicky calls, especially since sirens could be heard. One caller indicates they heard the school was hit by a tornado.
- The severe weather will delay normal bus routes.



Break into groups and discuss:

1. Who at the school should be responsible for communicating with the public?
2. What are the main objective(s) of your communications?
3. Talk about how content clearance processes should work. How quickly do you think that person could get approval?
4. Decide what forms of communications you will be using. As a group:
 - If you have decided to micro-blog, write one or more postings about the situation using 140 characters (including spaces) or less.
 - Could this message be easily understood in other mediums?
5. Determine what Social Media you should be monitoring for rumor control and to determine how your message is being portrayed.
6. Determine if there are any privacy concerns or issues that should be considered.



- Incorporate Social Media into overall communications strategy.
- Ensure you have the staffing resources necessary to implement Social Media effectively during all phases of an emergency.
- Market your new tools to ensure stakeholder buy-in.
- Clearly communicate policies and procedures to all stakeholders.
- Seek out promising practices for guidance.



- **The Center for Disease Control Social Media Tools Guidelines and Best Practices**
 - U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. “The Health Communicator’s Social Media Toolkit”.
http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf
- **American Red Cross Social Media Handbook**
 - Power Point presentation for Red Cross Chapters, but has useful information for anyone new to social media.
 - <http://www.scribd.com/doc/37958422/American-Red-Cross-Social-Media-Handbook>
- **University of Utah: Center for Public Policy and Administration**
 - [Social Media in Local Government](#): Guide developed by Megan Crowley
- **Making the Most of Social Media: 7 Lessons From Successful Cities**
 - Fels Institute of Government, March, 2010
 - http://ivyridgegreen.org/media/Fels_socialmedia_final.pdf



Support Resources (cont'd)

- **IACP Center for Social Media**
 - U.S. Department of Justice's clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel develop enhance agency's use of Social Media and integrate Web 2.0 tools into agency operations.
 - <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/>
- **Orange County (CA) Social Media Policies**
 - Includes Social Media website and related policy documents
 - <http://www.ocgov.com/ocgov/Info%20OC/Departments%20and%20Agencies/Chief%20Information%20Officer/eGovernment%20Policies>
- **iDisaster 2.0 Social Media and Emergency Management**
 - Blog with relevant information for emergency response personnel and a fairly comprehensive bibliography.
 - <http://idisaster.wordpress.com>



Presentation Credits

- Thank you to the following persons for their role as lead authors of this presentation:
 - **Kim Stephens**
 - Find her blog: <http://idisaster.wordpress.com>
 - Send her a tweet: @kim26stephens
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<http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan>

Readiness and Emergency Management for
Schools (REMS)
Technical Assistance (TA) Center
<http://rems.ed.gov/>



The REMS TA Center was established in October 2007 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students.

The center supports schools and school districts in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency management plans by providing technical assistance via trainings, publications and individualized responses to requests.

For additional information about school emergency management topics, visit the REMS TA Center at <http://rems.ed.gov> or call 1-866-540-REMS (7367). For information about the REMS grant program, contact Jade Anthony (jade.anthony@ed.gov).

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For More Information Contact:

REMS TA Center
(866) 540-7367 (REMS)
<http://rems.ed.gov>
info@remstacenter.org

