SMART TIPS FOR CATEGORY 1 RESPONDERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

March 2012
Social media is a social medium for the people by the people about the people.

Social media benefits emergency management as well as the public.

Think before you leap and develop a strategy.

One size does not fit all. Do your research.

Preparedness is the most critical and difficult stage.

Engage, interact, participate...don’t just broadcast.

Understand the level of resource needed.

Seek out promising practices and share them.

Start small, fail early, learn often.

This set of smart practices will help to get you started...
In 2011 at least 77% of UK households had Internet access.

In 2011 45% of UK Internet users used a mobile phone to connect to the Internet.

25-34 year olds are now the largest age group on Facebook.

Twitter grew overall by 800% in 2010.

Twitter showed explosive growth in 2011 with the number of reported users more than doubling from 12 million to 26 million.

Twitter is adding nearly 500,000 new users per day.

The use of wireless hotspots in the UK almost doubled in 2011 to 4.9 million users.

In March 2012 there were 30,484,380 Facebook users in the UK. This represents 48.89% penetration of the population.

1 in 7 minutes online is spent on Facebook.

Facebook has over 900 million users worldwide, half of which use the service on a daily basis.

Over 3 billion videos are viewed on YouTube everyday.

The rise of social media: key trends.

Social networking accounts for 23% of all time spent online in the UK.

In the UK, 6 million people (around 10% of the population) accessed the Internet over their mobile phone for the first time in 2011.

Twitter’s age profile is dominated by the 25 – 44 age group, accounting for over 60% of users.
Use of the internet is growing
Each year more UK households become connected to the internet, and an increasing number of people connect to the internet using mobile phones and wireless hotspots. The worldwide use of social media is also on the rise, with more social media accounts being opened year on year, and a greater proportion of online time being spent on social media sites.

Whilst there appears to be huge growth in the use of social media, trend data is starting to show a decline in visits to official brand websites (e.g. car manufacturers, clothing and sporting goods). It has been predicted that social media sites will increasingly be used as a portal to the rest of the internet, and to access everything we do online.

Who uses social media?
Demographic information shows that social media is not just a tool for the young. For example, the total number of Facebook users in the UK is reaching 30,484,380, representing a population penetration of 48.89%, and a growth of more than 315,840 in the last 6 months. The figure to the right shows that 40% of these users are over the age of 35.

Benefits of social media for Government

- Increase access to audiences
- Improve engagement with citizens, partners and stakeholders
- Increase the speed of public feedback and input
- Reach specific audiences on specific issues
- Reduce dependence on traditional media channels
- Counter inaccurate press coverage

Engaging with distributed audiences
The key characteristics of social media are: **Connectedness, participation, openness, conversation and community**. These provide the means to encourage engagement and allow Government to develop interactive relationships between themselves and the public.

Effective use of social media can help Government to better understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific and distributed audiences.
LEVERAGING YOUR NETWORK DURING EMERGENCIES

How can social media help in an emergency?

• Permits instant transmission of messages direct to followers.

• Can reach a broad number of people and organisations.

• Contributes to the public’s situation awareness as an emergency unfolds, and can help responders gain a more accurate picture.

• Helps to co-ordinate response efforts.

• Supports rumour management and correction of mis-information.

• Helps to connect the community after an emergency to help the recovery effort.

• Can help to co-ordinate clean-up activities and volunteer efforts.

• Provides a way for the community to express and offer support its members.

In the US social media sites are the fourth most popular source to gain emergency information

Emergency Management personnel agree that social media is an effective mechanism for sharing timely and accurate information with ease during an emergency situation

Examples of using social media in emergencies

Social media has been extensively used to communicate key information during emergencies.


➢ Australian Country Fire Authority (2009) – Australian Fire Authority used twitter to send out regular alerts and updates regarding the Victorian bushfires.

➢ Haiti earthquakes (2010) – social media was used to share information, react to the situation and to rally support.
Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging site that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets.

Tweets are text-based posts which are displayed on the author’s profile page and delivered to the author’s subscribers who are known as followers.

Key Terms:

**Retweeting** - Retweeting is the act of sharing someone else’s tweet with your followers—spreading the word wider.

**@replies** - Use an at sign (@) in front of a Twitter username to reply to someone, to refer to them.

**Hashtags** - Use the sharp or number sign (#) as part of a “hashtag” to organise and categorise your information.

How does Twitter work?

Twitter lets you write and read messages of up to 140 characters, or the very length of this sentence, including all punctuation and spaces.

The messages are public and viewable from the author’s profile page. Users are able to decide which accounts they follow and receive messages from.

Users can respond to tweets in the following ways:

- Send the author a message back.
- Subscribe to receive future tweets from the author by ‘following’ them (if you are not already doing so).
- Retweet the message (i.e., send the message in its entirety to your own ‘followers’).
- Expand the conversation by sending their own tweet about what the author has written.
- A combination of the above.

Utility of Twitter in Emergency Management

- **Immediacy**, in that it gets information out to the public straight away.
- **Ability to inform the public and spread understanding.** This increases the feeling of safety.
- **Wide reach**, allowing crisis communication to traders, businesses, media and inhabitants.
- **Ability to gain feedback and receive direct communication** ensures it is a valuable tool to be engaged with during emergencies.
- **Capacity to conduct rumour management and correction of mis-information**.
- **It is easy to use and therefore allows easy access to all key information**, for both responders and the general public.

Sample Tweets by UK CAT 1 Responders:

~Fact of the day - We travelled more than 270,000 miles last year keeping our district clean. U can report litter online [http://ow.ly/8uTWb](http://ow.ly/8uTWb)

~Fiat Punto broken into overnight in Co-op car park, Stapleford. Side window smashed and stereo stolen. Remember to #mindyourmotor

~It’s #testittuesday once again, make sure you test your smoke alarm today
What is Facebook?
Facebook is a free social networking site that allows people to connect with their selected network of ‘friends’. It currently has over 500 million users worldwide and the average Facebook user has 130 friends.

There are multiple ways to interact - chat, email, photo, video, file-sharing, blogging, common interest groups and more. The average user spends more than 55 minutes a day on Facebook.

**Key Terms:**
- **Profile** - Contains demographic information, and through which people can contact you.
- **Groups** - Enable those with similar interests to discuss a particular topic.
- **Fan Pages** - Belong to individuals/organisations, used to discuss interests.
- **Wall** - Used to post text, images, videos or links, and view posts from others.
- **Friends** - Those you allow to access your profile.
- **Likes** - Viewers can ‘like’ a status update or wall post to show they found it useful. You can also ‘like’ a page to receive updates from them and access their wall.
- **News Feed** - Shows the most recent/most commented on information from your friends or pages that you ‘like’.
- **Share** - A status update or wall post can be ‘shared’. This is then accessible to the sharer’s ‘friends’.

**Utility of Facebook in emergencies**
- Providing swift updates containing information and a link to the main page can update the public in an effective and timely way.
- Providing a forum for discussion (the group’s ‘wall’) so questions and answers can be quickly updated in order to prevent rumour spreading.
- Information can be spread on a large scale and can be shared by ‘friends’ or ‘members’ to widen its reach further.

**Who else is on Facebook?**
- UK Police
- Government Departments
- Corporate Companies/Brands
- Public Figures
- Charities
- NHS
- UK Fire and Rescue Services
- Local Councils
- Politicians

**How does Facebook work?**
Pages can be searched for by anyone, but to access it, you must ‘like’ the page, request to join or request a friend. You can also be asked to join or be sent a ‘friend’ request.

**How do you communicate?**
- **Status Updates**: Usually a 1-2 sentence update from the owner of the page. Every time there is a status update it appears on the news feed of ‘friends’ or those who ‘like’ the page. They can also be ‘shared’ by readers, liked and commented on.
- **Wall Posts**: Used to share text on the ‘wall’ and can be uploaded and accessed by all ‘friends’ or those who ‘like’ the page. They can be commented on, ‘liked’ and ‘shared’. Wall posts have no length restrictions.

**Example of uses in emergencies**
During the Iceland volcano (2010), Facebook was used by the public to advertise shelter and accommodation available through ‘I need to get home’ groups. Facebook was also used to coordinate transportation efforts.

During Hurricane Gustav (2008) Facebook was used to notify emergency responders and the public of events in real time. Facebook was also used to send mass emails to team members when the call notifications system crashed.

The Red Cross uses Facebook to issue alerts of potential disasters.
**YouTube** is a video sharing website. Users can upload and share videos of up to 10 min duration. Unregistered users can watch the videos. Registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos.

**Flickr** is an image and video hosting website where community members can share and comment on media.

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**UTILITY OF YOUTUBE AND FLICKR**

**Youtube:**
- To house video footage compiled by CAT 1 organisations.
- As a platform for some information appeals.
- As a platform to launch Viral Campaigns.

**Flickr:**
- Use of photos to identify individuals e.g. offenders (2011 summer riots), or missing individuals.

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**Who else is on YouTube and Flickr?**

- UK Police
- UK Fire and Rescue Services
- Local Resilience Forums

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**YouTube usage**

- 60 hours of video are uploaded every minute, or one hour of video is uploaded to YouTube every second.
- Over 4 billion videos are viewed a day.
- Over 800 million unique users visit YouTube each month.
- YouTube had more than 1 trillion views, or almost 140 views for every person on earth.

**YouTube and wider social media**

- 500 years of YouTube video are watched every day on Facebook, and over 700 YouTube videos are shared on Twitter each minute.
- 100 million people take a social action on YouTube (likes, shares, comments, etc.) every week.
- An auto-shared tweet results in 6 new youtube.com sessions on average and we see more than 500 tweets per minute containing a YouTube link.
- Millions of subscriptions happen each day. Subscriptions allow you to connect with someone you're interested in – whether it's a friend, or a group – and keep up with their activity on the site.
- More than 50% of videos on YouTube have been rated, or include comments from the community.
- Millions of videos are ‘favourited’ every day.

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**Use of Flickr by MET police to identify suspects**

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**IMAGE AND VIDEO SHARING SITES**

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THINK BEFORE YOU LEAP: Develop a strategy

Determine your objectives

• What do you want to use social media for?
  • *Break down your overall goals and see where social media can help.*
• What do you want to achieve? Be realistic!
  • *Usually a mix of ‘results’, ‘tactical’ and ‘capacity’ based objectives such as:*
    • Increase email alert sign-ups by 500 in the next 6 months.
    • Increase website traffic from Facebook by 25% by April 2012.
    • Increase the age/ethnicity/gender/geographical range of Facebook fans by 20%.
    • Identify the top 10 influencers on twitter to help spread messages by August 2012.
    • Conduct an audience survey to determine where to expand and diversify presence.
    • Integrate social media across communications and emergency planning teams.

Identify your target audience

• Who are they?
• What do they look for?
  • *What do they find interesting and useful? Do they like images and video?*
• What are they saying?
  • *Do they talk about you? Do they talk about emergencies? How?*
• Who are the influencers?
  • *Who do they listen to? Who has lots of fans? Who is linked to other networks?*

Develop an internal approach

• Which social media platforms and information management tools do you want to use? How will you integrate them?
• Who will be responsible for day-to-day use? Who will be responsible in an emergency?
• What training and education do you need?
• What are the risks and how will you manage them?
• What policies and practices do you need to adjust or develop?
• What kind of interoperability protocols do you need to agree with your partners?
• How will you use social media to manage your relationship with the media?
Establish a presence

- Open social media accounts, complete your profile, and launch your presence.
- Listen to what your audience is saying about topics you care about. Identify similar sites to yours and gauge how effectively they engage the target audience.
- Download tools that can help you keep track of content.
- Develop a content strategy, including when to use auto feeds and pre-planned responses.
- Begin content distribution.
- Be found: Develop a marketing strategy for how and where you will publicise your social media presence.
- Note and respond to changes e.g. volume, reactions, sentiments.

Sustain your presence

- Think of ways you can maintain interest in your sites:
  - Consider using a variety of formats – pictures, videos, text, links.
  - Promote ‘helpful’ content and share other peoples’ content.
  - Inject some fun and make use of games and competitions.
- Strive to interact and engage rather than broadcast:
  - Plan regular posts, monitor your sites frequently and ensure you respond to questions and feedback.
  - Ask questions, promote discussion, ask for feedback.

Evaluate and learn

- What does success look like? How do you know when you have met your objectives?
  - Try – one size does not fit all!
  - Measure – measure how well you are meeting your objectives.
  - Iterate – always feed information back and update your approach.
How can you increase your fan base?

Preparedness is the most challenging phase of implementing and sustaining a social media presence. A lot of effort and resource is required to build up a strong network of ‘fans’ to enable you to reap the benefits during the Response and Recovery phases. You will not gain a strong fan base just by creating a social media account or profile. Think about when, where and how you will promote your presence, and consider the different stages of expansion and associated activities below.

1. Minimal Reach
   - **Activities Include:**
     - Establish connections with partners and local organisations you already know.
     - Publicise your presence in press releases, and place links to your social media sites on your main website.
     - Provide regular updates on interesting activities.

2. Established Online Profile
   - **Activities Include:**
     - Engage with the media.
     - Connect with local influencers.
     - Establish connections and strategy with other Responders.
     - Initiate conversations with your audience, encourage feedback.
     - Retweet others and ask others to retweet your own messages.
     - Use popular hashtags e.g. #followitfriday.
     - Participate on other sites and they will start to follow you.

3. Full Online Presence
   - **Activities Include:**
     - Implement online interactive campaigns, e.g. competitions, games.
     - Establish connections with a respected local celebrity.
     - Integrate your social media platforms and website.
How can you engage with your audience?

Social media is all about engaging, interacting and participating, rather than one-way broadcasting. Your engagement strategy will start with understanding your target audience. Once you know who they are and what interests them, consider the following engagement stages and associated activities. Bear in mind that as a general rule of thumb, whilst the benefit gained increases with the level of engagement achieved, so does the level of resource and effort required.

**1. Passive**
- **Activities Include:**
  - Post highlights and links to information from other sources e.g. Web.
  - Establish an auto feed of ‘news’ from your website.

**2. Active**
- **Activities Include:**
  - Post frequently according to your content plan.
  - Share others’ content through retweets, sharing and linking.
  - Allow and respond to comments, feedback, questions, tags and notes.
  - Use multiple formats e.g. video, images, text.
  - Join in relevant conversations.

**3. Proactive**
- **Activities Include:**
  - Integrate your posts across all online platforms according to your content plan.
  - Encourage comments, feedback, questions, tags and notes.
  - Initiate and search for relevant conversations to join in.
  - Split your accounts or pages by interest group.
  - Gather opinions through online surveys, and seek input into and feedback on emergency planning activities.
PREPARE: Tips on Engagement

How to respond to criticism
Take it in your stride and work to find an answer. How you respond is vital. It is a positive thing that people care enough to enter into a discussion!

Do:
- Respond as quickly as possible.
- Respectfully correct inaccurate information.
- Explain how you are going to address the criticism.
- Invite further feedback.

Don’t:
- Ignore it or delete it.
- Yell or preach.

How to handle mistakes
Accept the fact that you will make mistakes but don’t let this fear stop you – we are only human, and the audience knows that!

Acknowledge that you were wrong and be quick to make any necessary changes.

LEARN from the experience!

Building credibility
Make sure you set up your profile fully, using familiar corporate images and logos.

Be transparent – say who you are and who you work for.

Add value by sharing tips and insights.

Be as accurate as possible.

Use a personal approach
Learn from observing how others speak and interact.

Use some pre-prepared responses until you feel comfortable.

Think customer not corporate.

Inject some fun into your posts where appropriate.

Be appreciative of peoples’ suggestions and feedback.

Accuracy
On a day-to-day basis providing accurate postings will help to build your credibility with the audience.

HOWEVER, during an emergency people actively look to social media for information that will help them build situation awareness and make decisions. Provide a steady stream of information to them, acknowledging where you are still waiting for facts and confirmations, and then provide updates when you receive them.
**PREPARE: How are you going to use it in an emergency?**

There are several areas that should be considered and planned for once an emergency occurs.

There are a number of ‘management’ issues to consider when using social media in emergencies. These include how the capability will be resourced during an emergency, and the logistics of this. Good practices include:

- Devising a rota system for staff who are ‘online’ 24/7 to monitor and respond to social media updates.
- Organise access to social media during the emergency (perhaps mobile access) and ensure relevant staff members have been trained, and have access to the sites.
- Ensure plans are flexible and able to deal with a variety of emergencies, and maintain flexibility.

The content of messages is critical. Areas to consider include:

- Using hashtags to allow information to be easily found. These could either be pre-prepared or created during the emergency. Hashtags can also be identified by monitoring conversations as there may already be some popular themes.
- Do you want a separate channel? This could be a separate twitter or Facebook account known as ‘dark sites’. These are ready to use sites containing links and information, but which are only activated during an emergency.
- Creating a newsroom feel environment on Facebook encourages confidence in the site as a valid and reliable source of information. It also enables quick updates, feeds and further information to be displayed.
- Consider how you will approach ‘accuracy’ issues. The public actively seek out information during emergencies and posting ‘something’ is preferable to posting nothing until all the facts are known.

Ensure protocols are in place. Aspects include:

- Ensuring there is an understanding between CAT1 responders of the roles of individual agencies. This could include nominating a lead responder, and a policy for other CAT1 responders to ‘retweet’.
- Incorporate social media into emergency response exercises to enhance training, and ensure staff are familiar with the technology and dealing with a range of situations.
- Devise messaging protocols such as the frequency of messages, and whether certain content may need approval. Ensure there are relevant mechanisms in place.
- Raise the awareness of the public regarding what is available through social media during an emergency, and what they might expect. For example, not using social media as a replacement for the 999 service.
**RESPOND: Using social media during an emergency**

During an emergency social media can be employed in a variety of ways to assist efforts to RESPOND to an ongoing incident.

Social media can be used as a **systematic emergency management tool**. It can be used by emergency management communicators to help:
- **Communicate** and engage with the public/affected individuals.
- Establish **situation awareness**.
- Upload **images** to verify or refute rumours.
- Gather **damage estimates**.

**Tips to increase SM effectiveness in RESPOND phase**

- Use sign-off ‘Please RT’ (retweet) to increase spread of message
- Target influential online individuals and encourage them to retweet messages.
- Ensure police are engaged with social media

**Case study of using social media in an emergency**:

During the 2011 summer riots the following steps allowed full integration of social media as a communication strategy when RESPONDING to an emergency.
- **Maintenance of social media presence** by communication team staff 24/7 for up-to-date news reporting and monitoring.
  - Use of **hashtags** to ensure information was rapidly seen by the largest proportion of users.
  - **Posting of audio messages** (shared through social media) from an Assistant Chief Constable.
  - Collecting and disseminating positive messages to front line staff.
  - **Answering questions** posed by social media users regarding the incident.
  - Using social media to **counter misinformation** and confirming, or rejecting, rumours.

**Use of tools during emergencies**

Several tools have been constructed that should greatly improve the integration of social media into emergency response. Tools such as TweetDeck (right) will:
- **Reduce resource** (time and personnel) requirements with regards to monitoring, searching and engaging with social media.
- **Reduce burden** on social media staff due to improved ability to filter key information.
- Help to **triangulate and co-ordinate campaigns** across social media.
Case study: 2011 summer riots – Broom Army goes viral

“Hundreds of people armed with brooms, bin bags and rubber gloves turned out across London to help clean up the damage caused by a third night of rioting, looting and arson. Co-ordinated online on Facebook and Twitter, volunteers mobilised in the worst-hit parts of the capital to sweep streets, help local shopkeepers and show solidarity with communities thrown into turmoil by the violence.” – Daily Telegraph 9/9/2011

Tips to increase social media effectiveness in RECOVERY phases

Use social media to disperse information about aid and support, and update it regularly.

Use sign-off ‘Please RT’ (retweet) to increase the spread of the message.

Target influential online individuals and encourage them to retweet messages.

Monitor for ‘emergent behaviour’ that can support recovery efforts, e.g. volunteer efforts.

Spread information that will help co-ordinate recovery efforts e.g. location of supplies, aid, volunteers.

Social media can assist the key areas of recovery in the following ways:

- **Environmental**: Social media can help co-ordinate clean-up efforts, recruit volunteers, and inform the public about waste collection efforts.
- **Humanitarian**: Social media can help communicate health care facility information and locations of health centres.
- **Economic**: Social media can be used to help disseminate information regarding businesses and encourage economic recovery.
- **Infrastructure**: Social media can be used to communicate recovery of infrastructure, to identify areas that are in most need of recovery. Site clearance can also be co-ordinated.
OVERCOMING SOME OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES

**Lack of knowledge / understanding / skills**
Try to identify an expert in your organisation – they may not be in the communications team!
Online communities and information can help.
Training courses are available.

**Potential for criticism and negative feedback**
Use it as an opportunity to influence perceptions and engage in conversation.
Always respond, never ignore it.
Observe and learn from others’ experiences.

**Prohibitive cost / resource**
Spread the load.
Set realistic goals and be explicit in your profile about what the public can expect.
Use tools and good practices to help reduce effort.
Look into using volunteers during emergencies.

**Handling the information**
Use freely available tools designed to help manage social media e.g. Hootsuite, TweetDeck.
Look for trends and verify those trends.
Develop and try out and develop some procedures.

**Lack of control**
Do not try to control your information – that’s not what social media is about.
Adjust your communication policies and practices for social media – it’s a different ball game.
Use a disclaimer in your profile.

**Measuring effectiveness and benefits**
Set realistic goals and objectives.
Counting ‘likes’ and number of fans is important, but think about how you can also measure behaviour change.
Track successes and promote them in your organisation.
**FURTHER RESOURCES**

**Statistics and trends**

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/index

www.socialbakers.com

http://www.wave6.co.uk/

**Guidance**

Engage: Digital and social media engagement for the police service, NPIA 2010

The health communicator's social media toolkit, Nov 2009

