

U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools



# Social Media in School Emergency Management

Using New Media Technology to Improve  
Emergency Management Communications

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# Presentation Goals

- To 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.)

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

**Prevention and Mitigation**

**Preparedness**

**Response**

**Recovery**





# Presentation Structure

What is Social Media?

Should schools engage in Social Media?

Considerations for:

- a) Goals and objectives
- b) Policies and issues
- c) Resources necessary

Description of Social Media tools and how to use them.





# What is Social Media?

- Social Media is the use of social networking sites, messaging sites, texting, and other web-based or mobile technologies to support social interaction.
- Facebook is by far the most widely used social networking site.
- Twitter is by far the most widely used messaging site.





# How are Schools Using Social Media?

- 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





# How are Schools Using Social Media?

- “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*





# Why?

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







# Why?

## **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.
- Establish a system of rapid communication to the broader community and the press.
- Eliminate the press as a filter.





# How We Communicate During a Crisis Has Evolved



1919



2005

Pre-1919



1968

911

Future?



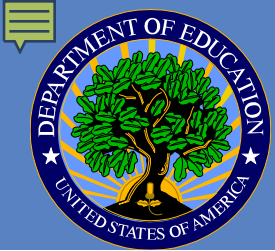


# Why are New Communication Technologies Important?

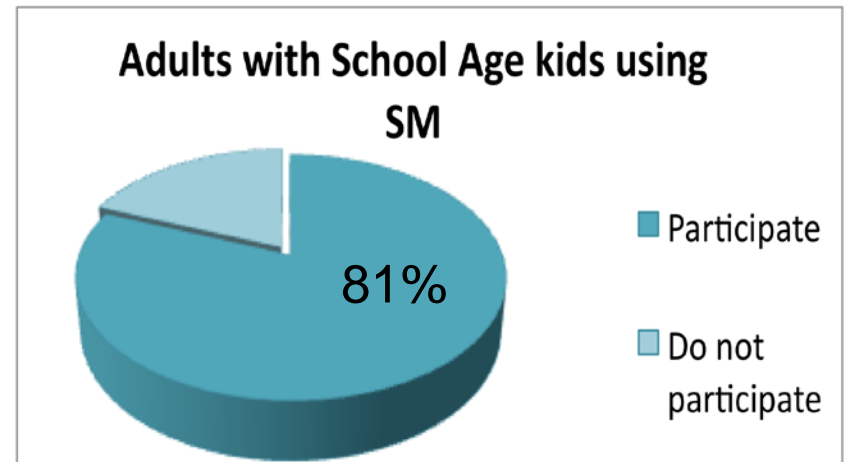
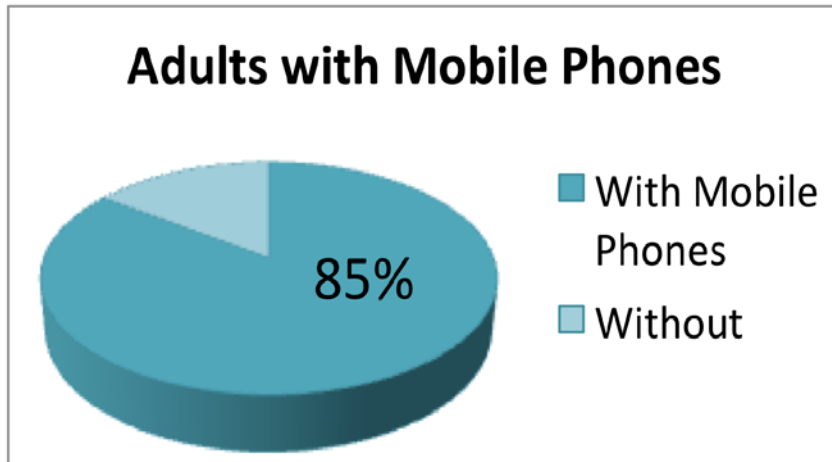
“As social media becomes more a part of our daily lives, people are turning to it during emergencies as well. We need to utilize these tools, to the best of our abilities, to engage and inform the public, because no matter how much federal, state and local officials do, we will only be successful if the public is brought in as part of the team.”

*Craig Fugate, Director  
Federal Emergency Management  
Agency*





# 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)**

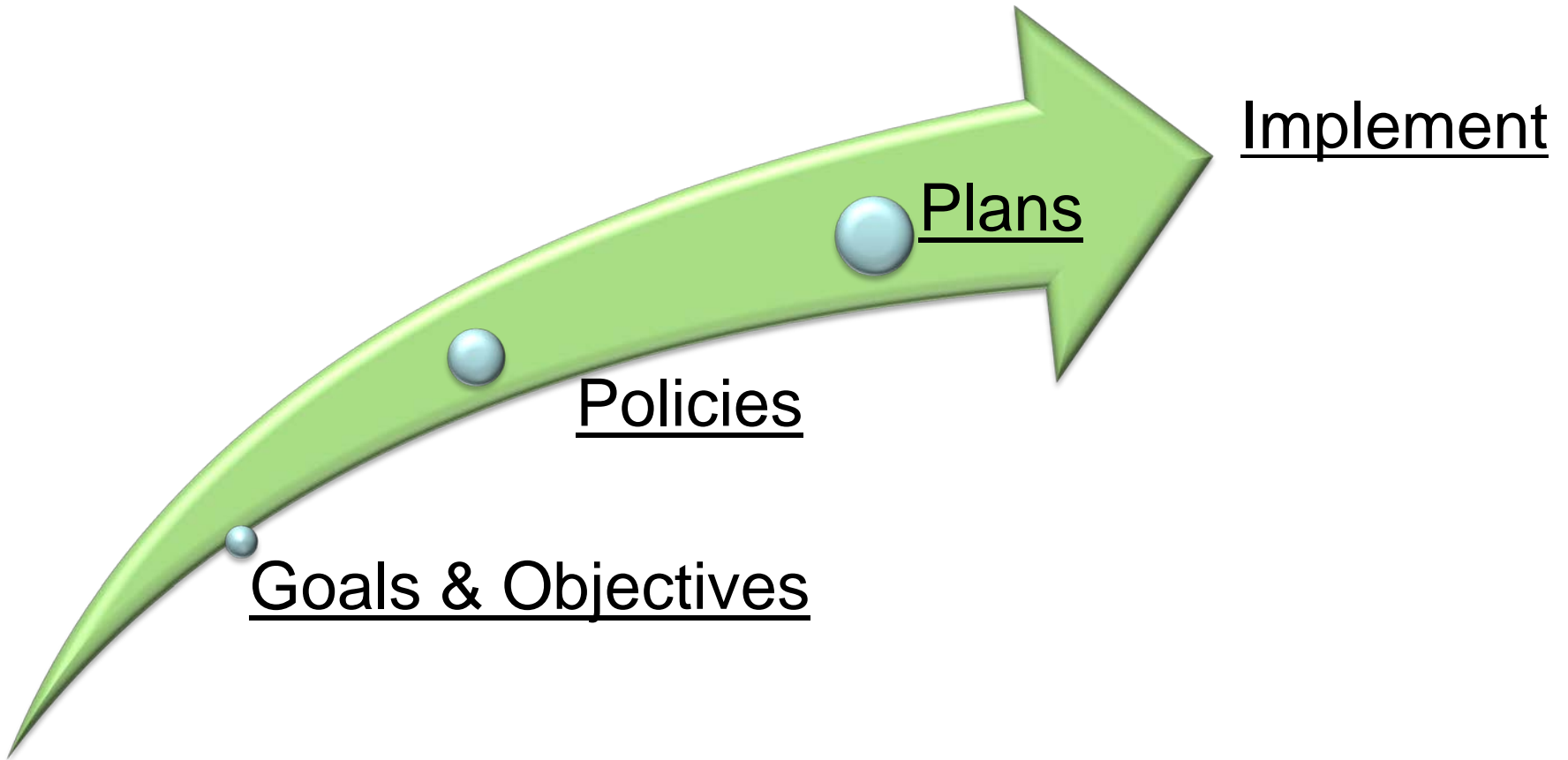
Source: Pew Research Center, Oct. 2010





How?

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

## Policies to consider:

- Who will deliver messages: Schools, District or both?
- Who will be responsible to clear 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 content posted on sites?**

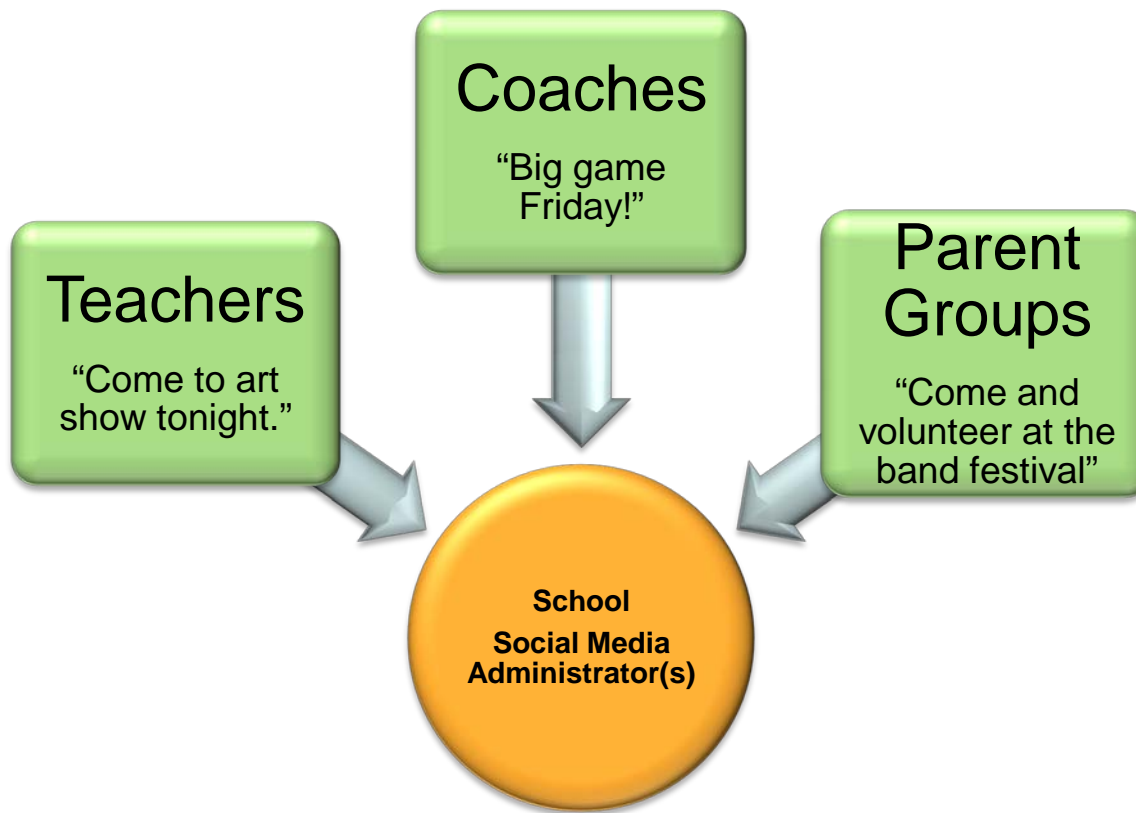
This is an important procedure to have in place, and should be consistent with procedures involving approval of emergency management information generally.







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





## 4. Prominently post comment policies.

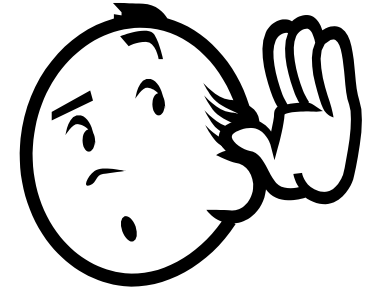
- Social Media is...**social**, you won't like every comment.
- Specify:
  - When/what comments will be deleted.
  - What personal info will and will not be posted.
  - Behavior you expect from students and parents on your sites.





## 5. Determine how to *listen*.

Comments and information posted on Social Media networks, such as Twitter, could be important for several reasons:



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.

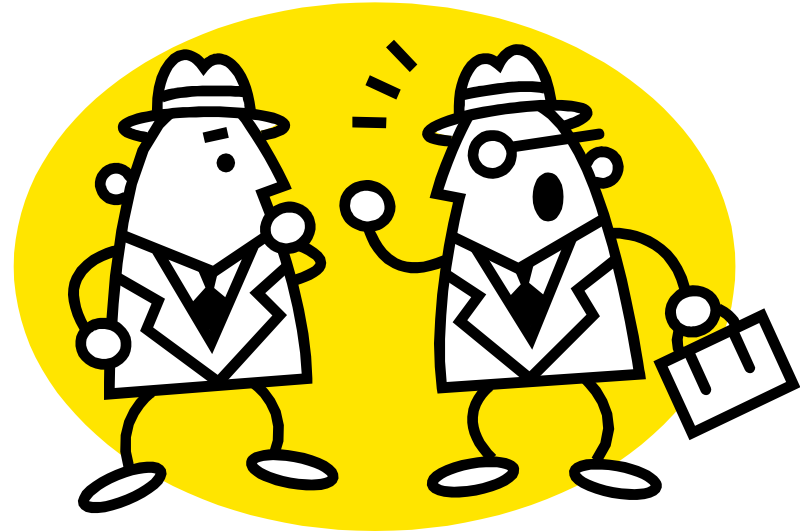
Ensure plans and procedures provide a feedback mechanism to ensure relevant information gets to school administrators and the incident commander.





# Review Example Policies

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

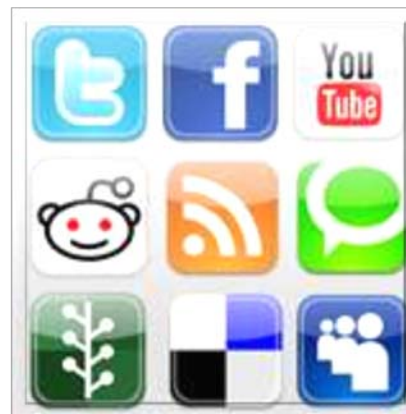




# Planning to Use Social Media

## Plan: Decide *which* tools you will employ and *when*.

- Which tools best suit your needs?
  - Can choose a social network (Facebook), a messaging site (Twitter), broadcast texting, 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 & Preparedness

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

Does more than one person know the passwords?

Who will send messages through SM daily?

Who is keeping track of comments and feedback?

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

**facebook** Email  Password   
 Keep me logged in [Forgot your pas](#)

[Sign Up](#) CRESA (Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency) is on Facebook  
Sign up for Facebook to connect with CRESA (Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency).

 **CRESA (Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency)** [Like](#)

[Wall](#) [Info](#) [Events](#) [Notes](#)

**Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency**  
-Halloween safety tips  
-Preparedness game to involve citizens

**Information**  
Location:  
710 W 13th ST  
Vancouver, WA, 98660  
Phone:  
360-737-1911  
Mon - Fri:  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
471 People Like This

9 hours ago · Comment · Like

 **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







# Seek Out Promising Practices

**CDC Provides Timely Updates**

- Information people seek
- Links to useful websites





# 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 is followed and all communications are cleared through incident commander.
2. Respond quickly to public's questions (or they will seek info elsewhere).
3. Monitor SM to determine what others are saying about event.





# 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 only info cleared by the lead PIO and that it is the same information they are posting to their Social Media platforms (unless cleared by lead PIO to post specific info for your audience).





# 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





# Using Social Networks for Recovery

Being able to connect aids recovery.

Community is encouraged to participate in recovery.



**Boulder Office of Emergency Management** The Dome Fire was 100% contained Monday night. Cause of #boulderfire still under investigation. Human activity in area most likely cause.  
14 hours ago

9 people like this.

View all 4 comments

Thanks to the firefighters especially the federal crew from SD! This is there second and third time coming down. Good job, Rosebud Crew!  
5 hours ago · Flag

thank you thank you thank you to everyone!  
3 hours ago · Flag



## 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

Citizens say “Thank you!”





# 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).
- Key issue: integration of emergency management purposes with a broader use of Social Media.
- Building this community requires an initial campaign and ongoing effective use of Social Media applications and tools.





# Social Media Implementation: Building a Community

- “We’ve been effectively using Facebook and Twitter for school closings. Our Facebook page currently has over 3,500 followers and growing.”

*Tulsa 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*







# 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.







# 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 info.

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 Web site 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>





# Micro-Blogging

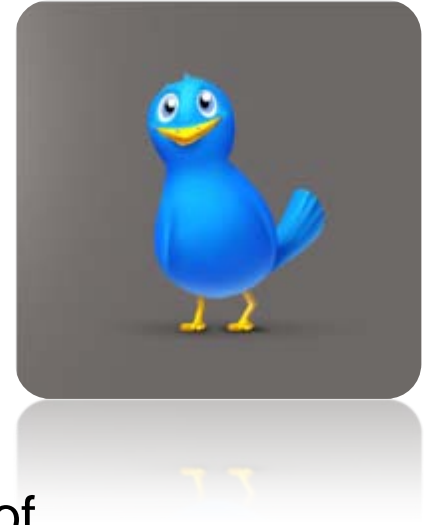
## Pros and Cons of Micro-Blogging

### 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 info others provide.

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





# 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 400 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 and easy to use and customize.
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 page.





# 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 <http://oneforty.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 each time information is posted about:
  - bus accident
  - town name
  - school name, etc.





# Monitoring (cont'd)

## Use a Dashboard:

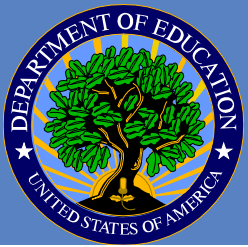
Dashboards allow you to put newspapers, blogs, weather, email, search, videos, photos, social networks, podcasts, widgets all in one page. These platforms can be public, and they can be accessed on a mobile device.

3. iGoogle

4. Addict-o-matic

5. Netvibes site





# Social Networks: Facebook Example 1



Add to My Page's Favorites

Suggest to Friend

The mission of Concordia High School is to instill in our students a commitment to life-long learning, leading, and living out God's Plan.

## Information

Location:  
3407 Red River St.  
Austin, TX, 78727

Phone:

## Concordia Academy High School, Austin



Wall

Info

Photos

Boxes

Events

Notes

Filters



**Concordia Academy High School, Austin** Do you have an 8th grade student interested in CHS? Have them come shadow a current 9th grade student! Shadowing takes place from 8:30-1:00 (includes 5 classes and lunchtime). Contact Traci Dube, Admissions Director to set up a date!

Anyone has permission to post on the wall.

November 4 at 2:52pm



likes this.

Very Nice Set Up! Looking forward to the Concordia Academy High School Gala tommorrow.

October 22 at 11:03am



**Concordia Academy High School, Austin** Thank you!  
October 22 at 11:28am · Flag





# Social Networks: Facebook Example 2

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile for Tulsa Public Schools. At the top, the Facebook logo is on the left, and a search bar and a 'Keep me logged in' checkbox are on the right. Below the header, there is a green 'Sign Up' button and the text 'Tulsa Public Schools is on Facebook' with a subtext 'Sign up for Facebook to connect with Tulsa Public Schools.' The profile header includes the Tulsa Public Schools logo, the name 'Tulsa Public Schools', and a 'Like' button. Below the header are navigation tabs for 'Wall', 'Info', 'Photos', 'Events', 'Notes', and 'Discussions'. The main content area shows two news stories. The first story is dated March 4 at 6:14am and is about an open house at the Early College High School. The second story is dated March 2 at 2:36pm and is about Cindi Hemm earning the 2011 Oklahoma Medal for Excellence in Elementary/Secondary Administration. On the left side of the profile, there is an 'Information' section with the location '3027 S. New Haven Ave. Tulsa, OK, 74114' and a section stating '3,943 People Like This'.





# 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





# 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 info 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





# 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 be gone by the time school normally lets out.







# Activity (cont'd)

## 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 1 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.





# Summary

- Incorporate Social Media into overall communications strategy.
- Ensure you have the staffing resources necessary to implement Social Media effectively during all phases of emergency management.
- 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](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](http://ivyridgegreen.org/media/Fels_socialmedia_final.pdf)





# Support Resources (cont'd)

- **Social Media for Responders**
  - Compendium of social media tools with a short synopsis of each tool and its application.
  - <http://oneforty.com/>
- **Orange County California Social Media Policies**
  - Includes Social Media website and related policy documents
  - <http://www.ocgov.com/ocgov/Info%20OC/Departments%20&%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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