A New Way to Communicate with Residents: Local Government Use of Social Media to Prepare for Emergencies

An ICMA Report

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ICMA *Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

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Introduction

This paper was written for ICMA members, and it explores how six local governments use social media to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Cities and counties are experienced in emergency preparation, but not with social media. While the overall trend of social media use has grown, local governments have been much slower to embrace this new technology.

In 2009, the Pew Research Center reported that 73% of American adults have a Facebook profile[1], but a study from the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government showed a different picture for local governments. According to the Fels social media survey, 50% of the cities surveyed did not have a Facebook page and roughly half of those surveyed did not use Twitter.[2] There is a caveat to these statistics, though; the cities involved in the Fels survey were already leaders in e-government. As such, this study indicates that social media is still quite new for local governments, given that half of the leaders in e-government currently use these new technologies.

Blogs, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube give local government new ways to communicate with residents. Though some cities and counties are just starting to tweet about council meetings and library closures, this white paper presents case studies from six local governments that use social media for emergency preparedness, and they include:

- The City of Evanston, Illinois
- Johnson County, Kansas
- The City of Moorhead, Minnesota
- Fort Bend County, Texas
- The City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- The City of Alexandria, Virginia.

While each of these local governments differs in population, geographical location, and the different types of emergencies they face, what they have in common is their social media use. Readers will learn about how each local government communicates with their residents and will see social media's potential use in emergency management.

This paper also includes recommendations from the local government leaders and staff in Evanston, Johnson County, Moorhead, Fort Bend County, and Arlington. Each area offers some advice about using social media for the purpose of emergency management. They provide recommendations about content management, third party applications, creating content, and determining when to use social media.

For readers interested in using social media in their local governments, there is also a resource section. These resources provide valuable information, and can help local government managers quickly jump onto Twitter, Facebook, and other social media websites to help their residents prepare for emergencies; these resources are also useful for those who are interested in learning about social media in general.

Lastly, because social media use in emergency management is a niche topic, this paper does not attempt to count how many local governments use this technology. Rather, this paper shares the experiences of those cities and counties with other ICMA members. The presented information comes from interviews with Wally Bobkiewicz, Evanston's City Manager; Adam Crowe, Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security's Assistant Director for Community Preparedness; Michael Redlinger, Moorhead's City Manager; and Lachlan Mullen, Fort Bend County Office of Emergency Management's (OEM) Regional Public Information and Crisis Communication System Administrator, and Jeff Braun, a former city manager and Fort Bend County OEM's Emergency Management Coordinator.

Case Studies

The City of Evanston, IL

According to Evanston's City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz, "Staff from Evanston should communicate with residents in a lot of places, including social media". The City already uses Facebook, Twitter, and the City Manager's Blog, and in September of 2009, the City of Evanston, IL launched a new Twitter page just for emergency alerts.

This Twitter page alerts residents about breaking public safety news, and city staff believed that it could be used for events specific to Evanston like snow emergencies and beach closures. Located just north of Chicago, the City of Evanston has beaches along Lake Michigan, and during the summer there are some days with high *E. coli* bacteria levels in the water that cause beach closures. Lightning, tornados, waterspouts, and biological or chemical spills also cause beach closures. During the winter, Evanston gets large amounts of snow, averaging 37 inches of snow a year, compared to the national average of 25 inches per year.[3]

The lighthouse at Evanston can't provide guidance in a storm, but perhaps social media could.

Twitter use

2009–10 turned out to be lighter than expected. The light winter was good news because the City experienced fewer emergencies, but it also meant that the staff only used the Twitter page three times. The tweets included: an emergency snow alert, an alert about bans for parking in snow routes, and an alert about a sewer collapse.

Since the Twitter page launched in September 2009, staff have not tweeted about emergency beach closures. Once the beaches open on Memorial Day 2010 staff will use the page, and will start a marketing campaign, encouraging residents to sign up and be informed about emergencies.

Twitter's benefits for emergencies

Bobkiewicz believes that Twitter is perfectly suited for emergency communication, unlike other social media. Evanston's Facebook has 2,200 fans and the site allows the City to give out information, but Facebook is limited because it is passive. Unless someone has a smart phone, people have to use a computer to log into Facebook and read any messages. During an emergency this may not be an effective way to communicate.

With the emergency Twitter page, anyone with a cell phone can receive tweets via text messages and they can be alerted regardless if they are near a computer. When stressing the benefits of Twitter Bobkiewicz said, "Twitter is the way to go. It's short and it allows people to communicate quickly. Most people have a cell phone and Twitter can connect to them, and that's the best way to alert people during emergencies."

The County of Johnson, KS

In Johnson County, KS, the Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Department uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and podcasts to help county residents prepare for emergencies. The County is also beta testing a Twitter Emergency Alert system.

Facebook

The County has two emergency management Facebook pages, and with the first page, the Emergency Management staff uses the Facebook wall to inform residents about some emergency management topics. The wall topics have included severe weather and snow alerts, announcements about the statewide Tornado Drill Day, and alerts about where county residents can get H1N1 vaccinations.

Given the prevalence of storms and tornadoes in Kansas, Johnson County decided to get involved in the use of social media as both preparation and alerts.

The 5,000 Prepared Citizens Campaign is Johnson County's second emergency management Facebook page, and its goal is for 1% of the County's population to publicly state that they want to be prepared for emergencies or disasters. Fans of this Facebook page learn about Flood Awareness Week, how to get their businesses or non-profit organizations prepared for emergencies, and what they can do to participate in the county's Severe Weather Awareness Week activities.

With Facebook, users can do more than just create emergency preparedness content; they can share other agencies and non-profit groups' emergency preparedness documents. On their Facebook wall, Johnson County staff has linked residents to the Helping Children Understand Natural Disasters PDF document. Created by the American Red Cross and Sesame Workshop, Sesame Street's nonprofit educational organization, this Sesame Street themed PDF provides parents with tips and guidelines to help their children make sense of a natural disaster. Johnson County also linked their Facebook fans to the State of Florida's Kids Get a Plan website. This website prepares children for emergencies and natural disasters with emergency preparedness children's books, coloring books, and computer games.

YouTube

On the Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security YouTube channel, staff members post two types of emergency preparedness videos. The first are videos made by other government agencies such as the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Office of US Homeland Security; videos from these agencies are reposted on the Johnson County Emergency Management YouTube channel. The other videos are created by Johnson County employees. The emergency management staff made educational videos about winter weather, emergency snow removal, how to use National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All Weather Awareness radios, and the Preparedness Piggy videos series.

The Preparedness Piggy videos are a fun way to educate county residents about a serious subject. In its two-part videos, this series uses county emergency management staff as actors and a stuffed pig who wears sunglasses called the Preparedness Piggy. The video's first part has county employees act out an improper way to handle an emergency or to prepare for one, and then the Preparedness Piggy comes in and alerts the viewers about the error. In the second part, the employees then handle the situation correctly. Currently, there are eight videos in the series and they talk about flu prevention, tornado preparedness, how to prevent electrical fires, the importance of having emergency supplies in the car, winter preparedness and generator usage, when to take a break from work, and a preparedness video based on the 12 Days of Christmas song (in this video there is a 12 Days of Preparedness song and each day in the song details an emergency preparedness tip).

Twitter

With Twitter, the County uses two of the microblogging websites. The first one mirrors the county's emergency management Facebook page. Wall postings on the Facebook page are sent out as tweets. The second one is the Johnson County Alert page. While this emergency management Twitter page is being tested, the idea is to have county residents sign up and then receive severe weather or emergency alerts via text messages. This Twitter page would then act like a reverse 911 system. Traditional reverse 911 systems are useful but they are limited because fewer people have land lines and even if they do, they may be away from home when the 911 system calls them about an emergency. Twitter alerts can compliment these systems. To use this alert system, residents need to sign up to the Twitter page and have a cell phone that receives text messages, and they can then get emergency tweets.

Twitter is geared towards this type of communication and Adam Crowe, Johnson County Emergency Management's Assistant Director for Community Preparedness, stressed this benefit. Crowe said "Twitter can reach a broader mobile audience than Facebook or a traditional blog because residents need a smart phone to access these websites, while Twitter can reach anyone with a cell phone".

Blogs and podcasts

Lastly, Johnson County uses blogs and podcasts for emergency preparedness. In the first blog, the Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security staff members write about how to prepare for disasters, and the second blog is about the County's Emergency Operations Plan. To reach a wider audience, Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security uses Odiogo, a website that converts blog text into an audio file. With Odiogo, Johnson County makes their emergency blogs into a podcast where residents can download them on iTunes. Crowe said, "These podcasts are great for people with disabilities, for those who speak English but may not be able to read the language, and for those people who prefer to listen instead of read".

Citizens of Moorhead, MN team up with the Minnesota National Guard to prevent flooding in 2009 with sandbags. Such efforts in the future will be even more effective by the use of Moorhead's Social Media Plan.

The City of Moorhead, MN

With a population of 36,012, the City of Moorhead, MN is a part of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area, and city employees use social media to communicate about emergencies, specifically flooding concerns with the Red River.

The Red River Flood

The Red River stretches from southeast North Dakota to Winnipeg, Canada along the North Dakota/Minnesota border, passing through the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. Seasonal flooding has been common in the past several decades in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. Spring snowstorms, combined with rain, an early thaw, and the area's flat terrain, contributes to extensive flooding on the Red River throughout eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota.

In the spring of 2009, the City of Moorhead and the Fargo-Moorhead area experienced the worst flooding in its history. In early March, the National Weather Service warned that the river's level could peak at 35 feet, but by March 28, 2009 the Red River's flood crest peaked at 40.82 feet, breaking the river's previous highest recorded water mark set in April 7, 1897.[4]

The 2009 Red River flood caused wide spread destruction throughout North Dakota and Minnesota. Specifically in Moorhead, the flood caused many problems for the residents and city staff. The flooding caused the evacuation of residents who lived next to the river, interrupting solid waste collection and residents' water usage. The flooding also closed bridges, roads, underpasses, and onramps to Interstate I-94, and shut down the Moorhead Metro Area Transit busses.

Moorhead's Social Media Plan

While the 2009 Red River flood was the worst on record, the flood season of 2010 is projected to be even worse. The winter storms of 2009 and 2010 brought massive amounts of snow to the Midwest and East Coast regions, hitting North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota the hardest. In December of 2009, this four state region received four times the normal amount of precipitation for the month.[5] The flooding hazard was so bad that on March 14, 2010, President Obama declared a state of emergency for North Dakota, and on March 15, 2010 Minnesota Governor Pawlenty declared a state of emergency for 28 Minnesota counties. By the middle of March 2010, the Red River's water level swelled to 31.5 feet, which indicates the possibility of a major flood. Yet this year's flood season will be different in part because unlike the 2009 flood, the City of Moorhead is using Facebook and Twitter as a part of its flood emergency plan.

The emergency plan has two parts. First, city staff broke Moorhead into eight different flood zones, and each zone has a zone team made up of a police officer, a fire fighter, a neighborhood liaison, and a member of the city engineering staff. The zones help coordinate public safety, monitor public infrastructure, and allocate city-provided resources like sand bags. Communication is the second part of the plan. The City of Moorhead created a flood webpage to inform residents about the current status of the Red River. The website gives information about the river's water levels, provides daily press releases, videos of press conferences, emergency contact information, and the

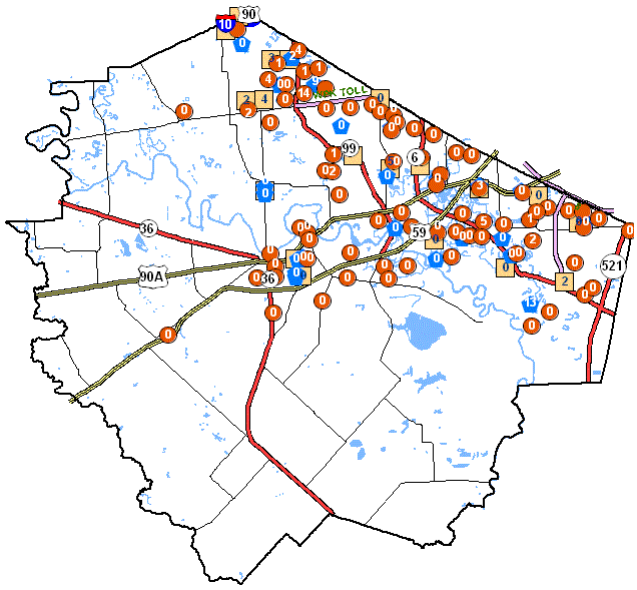
National Weather Service's weather and river forecasts. Even though Moorhead's flood website provides vital information, it is limited because the website is passive, and that is where Twitter and Facebook come in. Social media complements the city's flood website because the technology allows the city staff to communicate proactively.

When residents sign up to the City's Facebook and Twitter pages, they receive real time flood updates and information, unlike the flood website. Moorhead staff can post information on the website, but residents have to visit the webpage to get the information. When people log into their Facebook or Twitter accounts the city's information will be there, and that allows for more active communication. Also, people can access social media sites on mobile devices such as smart phones, Blackberries, and iPhones. "Mobile access is especially useful during an emergency because people may not be able to use their computers or land lines, but with a smart phone they can access Facebook or Twitter and get updated about the flood situation", said Moorhead City Manager, Michael Redlinger.

Moorhead's Facebook and Twitter postings have included notices about press conferences, road closures, flooding alerts, state of emergency declarations, and updates about the eight flood zones and any flood zone meetings. With the social media sites, Moorhead has also asked volunteers from the community and students from Minnesota State College at Moorhead and Concordia University to help with sand bagging flood prone areas.

The County of Fort Bend, TX

The Fort Bend County OEM's social media use started with the H1N1 virus. By August 6, 2009, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported that there were 159 confirmed H1N1 cases in Fort Bend County, and by the end of the summer there were hundreds of suspected cases. During the same time some county residents began communicating about the disease on social media. Although most of these were truthful conversations, some residents talked about rumors, such as how the H1N1 virus killed thousands of people in the Fort Bend County area. Even worse, people treated this as real news. The staff from Fort Bend County OEM used Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to discredit speculation, communicate what the County OEM was doing about the disease, and to control the H1N1 conversation.



A screenshot of the interactive, online tracking map for reported cases of H1N1 in 2009, from the Fort Bend County Office of Emergency Management website.

The H1N1 response

In Fort Bend County, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) handled the public health response, and did things like daily conference calls with local hospitals, county employees, and health officials to coordinate the H1N1 response. The OEM acted as a conduit for H1N1 information in the County.

By tweeting and posting on their Facebook wall, OEM gave its social media followers all kinds of information about the disease including: the symptoms of H1N1, how the virus spreads, the County's H1N1 Community Mitigation Strategies, notices about the County's 2009 Emergency Preparedness Workshops, announcements about the number of H1N1 cases in the County, tips on flu prevention, notices about where to get H1N1 vaccinations, clinic closures, and advice about when to go to the emergency room for H1N1.

Staff from Fort Bend OEM also tweeted and used Facebook to share H1N1 information from other county departments, non-profits, and other government agencies. Fort Bend OEM shared press releases from the County HHS to its social media networks, and also provided the Red Cross's Flu Checklist, the CDC's Guidelines for Treating Pregnant Women and Children Infected with H1N1, the Texas Department State Health Services' video blog about how to prevent the flu, and information from a city within the County, Missouri City's 211 service for flu advice.

The City of Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia is only recently able to make this list, but for good reason: earlier in May 2010, it was awarded for "Best Process Improvement" by the Emergency Management Magazine's Digital Distinction Awards. As the award informs us, it's brand new Integrated Public Warning System

> provides for notifications such as crime alerts, traffic alerts and health alerts, but also provides its 10,000 subscribers with emergency notifications via text and e-mail across multiple platforms—including social media networking sites such as Twitter, My Space and Facebook—as well as an electronic signage system installed on newsstands throughout the central business district.[6]

This is a massive series of achievements for the city, and it has also managed to make the presentation of services to its prospective citizen-users very approachable. As can be seen on its homepage,[7] it clearly states that these various services are free for citizens, but warn that cellular companies could potentially charge extra. In this way, the services are available to the majority of citizens, who will have a cell phone available to them. There are also a large set of additional options for people with smart phones or a computer that gives them Internet access: Philadelphia offers the release of emergency information via Blogspot, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube.

Functional integration of services

From the homepage[8] of the Philadelphia Managing Director's Office of Emergency Management, all of the aforementioned services are clearly listed consecutively. In that way, a citizen of the city could instantly figure out which of the services they were best-suited to use, and then sign up for said services all from one place online. Even more importantly, though, is that it has visually placed all of its new award-winning technology-based warning methods next to its honed lists and directions for citizens being prepared. In this way, it is seeking to truly integrate emergency management in ways different than any of the preceding cases: Philadelphia pairs the ability to inform the populace of an emergency with the practice of helping enable that same populace to be at least somewhat self-sufficient in the face of an emergency.

By having a large set of social networking platforms combined with both the traditional centralized city government webpage and the innovative use of electronic signs on newsstands, the city of Philadelphia has managed to take large steps forward in forging an all-inclusive method of both warning citizens about emergencies as they arise, and preparing them to deal with those potential emergencies.

The US Army Corps of Engineers does a drill with the Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management, in order to prepare for the possibility that power is lost for critical services. They would use their social media instruments to share details of the progress of such an operation with the public, thus keeping everyone informed in the event of an emergency.

The City of Alexandria, VA

H1N1 Communications

Given its proximity to the multiple airports and large number of travelers in Washington, DC, the city of Alexandria VA had some special concerns about the spread of disease during the H1N1 crisis, and responded with social media in some novel ways. As with several of the other case studies thus far, Alexandria made interlocking use of multiple media: from Facebook and Twitter to print media, television, and radio. At the same time, information on the situation was distributed via the resident newsletter of the city, called *FYI Alexandria,* which reached additional segments of the population; this effort was combined with additional efforts including a continuously-updated portion of the city website devoted to H1N1 updates (in both English and Spanish), and flyers which promoted healthy habits and locations of clinics in the case of problems. Additionally, the city provides an "eNews" service, which provides alerts and updates via messaging to residents who subscribe, keeping them armed with real-time information about which clinics had sufficient stocks of vaccines to offer them out, and even the wait times at those various clinics; even the press made use of these valuable pieces of data in their programming.

The aforementioned plan is a comprehensive, all-encompassing scheme to provide information to all segments of the citizenry, and was no accident; Alexandria ensured partnerships both between city offices as well as state entities to make this system a functioning reality. The Alexandria Health Department worked closely with the Alexandria Communications office, in order to offer many of the aforementioned services and announcements. Additionally, the Regional Virginia Department of Health provided a liaison in the form of its public information officer, and this partnership provided additional expertise for the purposes of disseminating the most current information, and could add the wider viewpoint of the state to the messages being sent out. Finally, the city of Alexandria operated under an Incident Command System structure for the extent of the H1N1 concerns, and this structure included the City Manager as the Incident Commander for the duration. As a result, the City Manager was able to secure many additional resources for the office of Communications from other departments and offices across the city that it would not normally have access to, thus ensuring a dedicated workforce to respond to the pandemic and keep citizens safe and informed.

Snow Communications

In December 2009 and February 2010, the City of Alexandria experienced historic snowstorms that left more than twenty inches of snow, and they were both significant weather events for an area that typically gets only fifteen total inches of snow annually. Given this unprecedented snowfall, plus the inherent difficulties of dealing with any large amount of snow within an urban setting, the city took action to provide the best possible information to its citizens while other departments worked to deal with the snow directly. The city's Office of Communications set out a comprehensive plan of communicating information to the citizenry, with a focus on keeping citizens updated as constantly as possible about specific changes to the amounts of snowfall and plowing in particular areas of the city. In addition, it wanted this system to incorporate the citizens themselves as "eyes and ears on the ground," due to the ever-shifting nature of challenges presented by weather conditions such as snow. As a result, the Communications Team used every tool available to them, ranging from postings on Facebook and Twitter to more traditional use of daily media interviews, electronic news messages, website updates, and the city's 24-hour Snow Hotline service. One of the services offered was the announcement

The City of Alexandria made use of a program called SnowReport, which allowed residents to receive live updates as to when and where the plows had operated.

that the snowfall being encountered was very heavy, wet snow, and this could (and ended up having) serious negative effects on the power infrastructure. After power was lost in many areas, citizens could be notified of additional news and updates, but this was only possible through the high availability of mobile devices, as well as a sound local government method of using them for the disbursement of information, via Twitter, Facebook, and their other social media presence. Additionally, they created SnowReport, an interactive online tool for residents to get real-time plowing updates, which was widely well-received. Through this application of overlapping outlets of information, including social media such as Facebook and Twitter, the City of Alexandria was able to not only provide a high level of accurate information, but also do so in a way that demonstrated that the city cared for all citizens and was working to respond directly to their concerns and reports.

Best practices

Establish a content management system and use third-party applications

Social media provides quick communication but this medium is fragmented. For example, a tweet does not automatically connect to Facebook and vice versa, and users would have to log into multiple social media accounts to share the same message. Fortunately, there are third-party computer programs that allow users to manage Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media websites seamlessly. With these programs, users can send out one message and it is passed out as a tweet, onto Facebook, and onto other sites. The

Cities of Moorhead and Evanston use Hootsuite to control their Facebook and Twitter pages.

Because third-party applications do a variety of things, local government professionals can use them to do more than just manage content. Fort Bend County OEM uses Slideshare to share its PowerPoint presentations on its Facebook page; for blogging, Johnson County Emergency Management uses Blogger, and Fort Bend County OEM uses Wordpress. Both Blogger and Wordpress are free blog-hosting websites and can be effortlessly linked to Facebook and Twitter.

Use social media to create your own content

Social media gives local governments their own media channel, and the local governments in this white paper created their own content that was tailored to their community's emergency management needs. Using social media, the City of Evanston sent out snow alerts, Fort Bend OEM managed the H1N1 scare, the City of Moorhead coordinated the response to the Red River Flood, and with YouTube and Preparedness Piggy Johnson County helped their residents prepare for tornados and winter weather. This usage is called narrowcasting, which allows local governments to send targeted messages to specific audiences.[9] More generally, Philadelphia has demonstrated that is possible to go from being uninitiated in social media use to winning awards for improvement.

While it has traditionally been the responsibility of local governments to provide high-quality emergency management, it is now more expected that cities provide constantly-updated information alongside the traditional services themselves.

Determine which staff can use social media before communicating with residents

Although Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are powerful technologies and are relatively new in their mainstream usage, they offer an entirely new approach to communication. Many local governments manage which individuals get to speak with the media and to residents, and in some larger cities and counties, a public information office handles all forms of communication. The same principle applies to social media, especially when local governments are using them to communicate about emergencies.

There are two ways to determine who gets to communicate on social media: social media policies and management's discretion. Similar to communication or media policies, social media policies give some guiding principles and goals, and they codify who gets to use social media. When stressing the importance of having a social media policy, Redlinger said, "I would advise any local government to create a policy before using social media because you want guidelines for who[m] is doing what".

Management discretion is another way to determine social media usage, and because the flood season came early in Moorhead, Redlinger and his staff did not have time to create a policy. Redlinger picked tech-savvy staff members to communicate with residents on Facebook and Twitter. Bobkiewicz took a similar approach: Evanston has a steering committee that shapes the City's internet presence, and Bobkiewicz let these staff members run the City's Facebook and Twitter pages. Since Johnson County is in the process of creating a social media policy, it also uses management discretion and each department head decides who uses social media. Fort Bend County also uses management discretion. Being a larger city, Philadelphia has a centralized department of emergency management, and the leaders therein determine the specific uses of social media.

If readers are interested in establishing a social media policy in their organization, they should access ICMA's Knowledge Network and download some sample policies from other local governments. Those links are located in the reference section of this paper.

Final points of consideration

Social media allows local governments to communicate with their residents in a more interactive way, but they are not going to replace traditional emergency management systems and communication strategies. Rather it is best to see social media as complimentary to an organization's existing emergency management efforts.

Also, be thoughtful when deciding to use social media for dealing with emergencies. Meet with your staff and discuss the merits of this new technology. Redlinger added that, "At a certain point a decision does have to be made and local government managers will have to decide if social media will serve their communities. Social media worked in Moorhead because of the 10,000 to 13,000 college students in the city, but the answer will be different in every community."

Lastly, former city manager and Fort Bend County OEM's Emergency Management Coordinator, Jeff Braun and Lachlan Mullen, Fort Bend OEM's Regional Public Information and Crisis Communication System Administrator, suggest reviewing the following factors before using social media to communicate about emergencies:

- There is an age gap with social media. Younger workers can jump right in but older employees may have a harder time with it.
- Technology shock: with social media, there is a lot of technology to learn and if you do not know how to use it, it can be overwhelming.
- There is an issue with staffing time. Local government managers will have to make a cost benefit calculation to determine if the time spent is worth the output.
- There are management and IT issues. Management and IT departments restrict internet access, phone usage, and Blackberries, but staff will need these things to use social media. This is a huge paradigm shift and local governments need to have social media usage policies.
- Social media is time-intensive and staff members will have to respond to comments and create content.
- Social media is an amplifier and it may not be a good option for slower-moving local governments because they end up appearing even slower.
- Realize that social media may not reach the elderly, the disabled, people without cell phones, people with low incomes, and people in rural communities.
- There may be issues with record-retention and social media may conflict with state record laws. To ensure that your organization's social media usage is complying with state laws, check with your organization's legal staff.

Tools and social media links:

These programs and websites allow users to control multiple social media sites at once and some of the most popular are TweetDeck, Hootsuite, and Socialoomph; all of these programs are free and users can create accounts with the links below:

- *TweetDeck*: www.tweetdeck.com
- *Hootsuite*: www.hootsuite.com
- *Socialoomph*: www.socialoomph.com

For blogging, consider using:

- *Blogger*: www.blogger.com
- *Wordpress*: www.wordpress.org

To make your blog posts into podcasts, consider using:

- *Odiogo*: www.odiogo.com

Tracking and statistics

It is important to monitor who is following your social media sites and how they are using them, and the links below provide great information.

- *Tweetstats*: this website gives statistics about your tweets including number of tweets posted and if people are following your tweets. tweetstats.com
- *Twitalyzer*: this allows you to track the effectiveness of a Twitter feed. twitalyzer.com
- *Bit.ly*: you can track if people are accessing your Twitter links; Bit.ly is also beneficial because it is a free URL shortening service, which is important for Twitter and other microblogs. bit.ly
- *Facebook Insight*: this tool allows you to track your fans, your interactions with them, and the quality of your posts. www.facebook.com/business/insights/?pages&i = 111677848858981
- *YouTube Insight*: similar to Facebook Insight, this tool lets you track your YouTube presence. www.youtube.com/my_videos_insight
- YouTube also has an instructional video about their Insight tool: www.youtube.com/t/advertising_insight
- Podbean: this website lets users track how others use their podcasts. www.podbean.com

Other social media information

Lachlan Mullen has created two great presentations on social media, available here:

- www.fbcoem.org/go/doc/1528/508863
- www.fbcoem.org/go/doc/1528/317175

University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government's *Making the Most of Social Media* manual:

- icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/104282/Fels_Institute_of_Governments_Making_the_Most_of_Social_Media_manual

Social Media Policies in ICMA's Knowledge Network:

- Roanoke County's, VA Social Media Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/4549Roanoke_County_Social_Media_Policy
- Suwanee, GA Employee Internet and Social Media Posting Guidelines: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/9166/Suwanees_Employee_Internet_and_Social_Media_Posting
- Suwanne, GA Social Media Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/9191/Suwanees_Social_Media_Policy
- The City of Arlington's, TX Social Media Policy and Social Media Definitions: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/105221/The_City_of_Arlingtons_Social_Media_Policy_and_Social_Media_Definitions
- The City of Winchester's, MA Social Media Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/105220/The_City_of_Winchesters_Social_Media_Policy
- Arlington County's VA, Social Media Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/6523/Arlington_County_Social_Media_Policy_and_Guidelines
- The Town of Avon's IN, Social Media Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/9036/Town_of_Avon_IN_Social_Media_Policy
- Fairfax County's, VA Public Web Site Content Policy: icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/documents/kn/Document/15010/Fairfax_County_Public_Web_Site_Content_Policy

Links to the social media websites referenced in this paper:

The City of Evanston

The City of Evanston website: www.cityofevanston.org

The City of Evanston's Emergency Twitter Alert page: twitter.com/CityofEvanston/urgent

Johnson County Emergency Management

Johnson County Emergency Management's website: www.jocoem.org

Johnson County Emergency Management's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/jocoem

Johnson County Emergency Management's 5,000 Prepared Citizens Campaign Facebook page: www.facebook.com/5000prepared

Johnson County's Preparedness Piggy Facebook page: www.facebook.com/preparednesspiggy

Johnson County Emergency Management's Twitter page: twitter.com/joco_emergency

Johnson County Emergency Management's Alert webpage: www.jocoem.org/CIT/jocoalert.shtml

Johnson County Emergency Management's Twitter Alert page: www.twitter.com/jocoalert

Johnson County Emergency Management's YouTube page: www.youtube.com/jocoemergencymgmt

Johnson County Emergency Management's Podcasts: itunes.apple.com/podcast/johnson-county-emergency-management/id316062397

The City of Moorhead

The City of Moorhead's website: www.ci.moorhead.mn.us/flood

The City of Moorhead's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Moorhead-MN/City-of-Moorhead/240928077335

The City of Moorhead's Twitter page: twitter.com/cityofmoorhead

Fort Bend County OEM

Fort Bend County OEM's website: www.fbcoem.org

Fort Bend County OEM's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/fbcoem

Fort Bend County OEM's Twitter page: twitter.com/fbcoem

The City of Philadelphia OEM

The City of Philadelphia OEM website: oem.readyphiladelphia.org/RelId/606683/ISvars/default/Home.htm

The City of Philadelphia's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Philadelphia-PA/Philadelphia-Office-of-Emergency-Management/49891680434

The City of Philadelphia's Blogspot page: www.philaoem.blogspot.com

The City of Philadelphia's LinkedIn page: www.linkedin.com/in/philaoem

The City of Philadelphia's MySpace page: www.myspace.coam/philaoem

The City of Philadelphia's Twitter page: twitter.com/PhilaOEM

The City of Philadelphia's YouTube page: www.youtube.com/philaoem

The City of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria's website: alexandriava.gov

The City of Alexandria's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AlexandriaVAGov

The City of Alexandria's Twitter page: twitter.com/AlexandriaVAGov

The City of Alexandria's eNews service: enews.alexandriava.gov/index.php?CCheck=1

Notes

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2. Chris Kingsley, Allison Brummel, Catherine Lamb, Jack Higgins, Andrews Biros, Callan Smith, "Making the Most of Social Media: 7 Lessons from Successful Cities," *Fels Institute of Government,* March 9, 2010, www.fels.upenn.edu/sites/www.fels.upenn.edu/files/PP3_SocialMedia.pdf (accessed July 20, 2010). Pg. 3.
3. Sperling's BestPlaces, "Best Places to Live in Evanston Illinois," n.d., www.bestplaces.net/zip-code/Evanston-Illinois-60201.aspx# (accessed July 20, 2010).
4. Dan Gunderson, Tom Robertson, Tim Nelson, Dave Kolpackm "Red River tops historic marker, undermines dike," *Minnesota Public Radio News,* March 27, 2009, minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2009/03/27/flood_friday (accessed July 20, 2010).
5. Douglas Belkin, Scott Kilman, "Midwest Braces for Floods," *The Wall Street Journal,* March 17, 2010, online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703734504575125670672385714.html (accessed July 20, 2010).
6. Emergency Management Magazine, "Emergency Management Digital Distinction Awards," May 4, 2010, www.emergencymgmt.com/digital-distinction-awards (accessed July 20, 2010).
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9. Chris Kingsley, Allison Brummel, Catherine Lamb, Jack Higgins, Andrews Biros, Callan Smith, "Making the Most of Social Media: 7 Lessons from Successful Cities," *Fels Institute of Government,* March 9, 2010, www.fels.upenn.edu/sites/www.fels.upenn.edu/files/PP3_SocialMedia.pdf (accessed July 20, 2010). Pg. 2.

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