What to do to
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Social media guidelines

I. Overview

This document will provide you with basic guidelines on using social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube to reach individuals and families about how to prepare for a disaster or catastrophe. Included are instructions on how to set up social media channels, posting and management recommendations, best practices, and tools to help streamline using social media within your agency.

Social Media Channels

Social media is a powerful tool that can help communicate with and engage your audience. In past catastrophes social media has been the communication tool of choice for many individuals. According to the American Red Cross, the internet is the third most popular way for people to gather emergency information, following television and local radio, with 18 percent of both the general and the online population specifically using Facebook for that purpose. We recommend the following social media channels to share preparedness information and engage with the public:

- Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and organizations. Users can create a profile, add people as friends, join common-interest groups and follow organizations. Facebook is a great place to build a community and spread content. In terms of disaster preparedness, as noted above it is a preferred tool to gather emergency information.

- Twitter allows you to connect instantly to what's most important to you – whether that be news, friends, experts or tips. Users can create a profile, follow people they know or are interested in and share short status updates (140 characters or less). Twitter is an ideal tool to share information quickly and in real-time, especially in cases of disaster.

- YouTube is a video sharing website that allows users to upload and watch video content including movie clips, tv clips, music videos, video blogs and original short videos. YouTube is beneficial for distributing compelling and educational videos about preparing and allows for sharing across multiple channels.

II. Setting up social media channels

By establishing these channels in advance of a disaster or catastrophe you can begin to serve your residents in preparedness and also provide a source of information and contact during major events. Many cities and counties already have social media accounts established. However, if you want to set up an account specific for your emergency management department or you don't have a Facebook page, Twitter account or YouTube channel, here are instructions for setting them up:

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A. Facebook Page

While a Facebook Page is completely separate of a personal Facebook profile, you are required to create the page from your profile to be able to administer the page.

- Visit http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php to create a new page
    - Choose the appropriate type of page (most likely Company, Organization or Institution)
    - Choose a category, type in company name and agree to terms
        - If you are not logged into Facebook, you will be required to do so at this time. If you do not have a Facebook account, at this point, you will need to set one up.
    - Step 1 - Profile Photo: Choose an image that can easily be recognized by your fans. This can be your logo or a compelling image that represents your organization.
    - Step 2 - Basic Info: Add your website address and put basic information about your organization here.
    - Step 3 - Get Fans: If you are ready to invite friends to like your page and start attracting fans, use one of the tools listed on this page to do so. If you aren't quite ready, you can choose "Skip" and come back to this at a later time.
    -

B. Twitter Account

Twitter is an information network made up of 140-character messages called Tweets.

- Visit http://www.twitter.com to create your Twitter account
    - Enter your full name, email address and password to sign up
    - On the next screen, you will have the opportunity to choose your username. A couple things to keep in mind when choosing a username:
        - This is what your audience will use to talk to you on Twitter so choose carefully
        - Capitalization does not matter – you will be able to type it either way: @emergencyinwa or @EmergencyInWA
        - User names can only be 15 characters in length
    - You will now be taken to the main page of your Twitter account, from here you can:
        - Create content to share with your followers – when you click in the "Compose new Tweet" box, you will be able to type 140 characters that will be sent to your followers and to anyone who finds you publicly on Twitter
        - Talk to others by replying to their tweets or retweeting them
        - Discover other people/organizations by using the menu bar at the top of the page – click on "Discover" to browse people and topics or search for something specific in the search field
    - Once you begin tweeting, here are a few basic tips on how to share:

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- Tweets are messages of 140 characters or less (including punctuation, spaces and links)
- To talk directly to another Twitter user or to mention them in a Tweet (this can be seen publicly), you place the @ before their user name - @wsdot for WSDOT.
- You will see the # sign used throughout Twitter - this is known as a hashtag. Hashtags are used to mark keywords or topics within a tweet. Anyone can create a hashtag by placing the # before the word(s). ie: #WASnow #SEAEarthquake
  - Hashtags help to categorize tweets and will show up more easily in a Twitter search
  - Clicking on a hashtagged word in any tweet will show you all other tweets with the same hashtag, whether you follow the user or not
  - Hashtags can be placed anywhere in the tweet

C. YouTube Channel
   YouTube allows people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos.
   o You will need a Google Account to upload videos to YouTube – if you already have a Google Account, you can sign in with those credentials. If not, follow this link to set up an account: https://accounts.google.com/SignUp
   o Once you've authorized or created your Google Account, you can upload your video by clicking the "Upload" link at the top of the page
     o You will be prompted to select the file on your computer
     o With a free account, you can upload HD videos up to 15 minutes long

III. What to post
Communicating simple, clear messages on social media channels is the most effective way to expand your reach and engage with your audience.

A. Content schedule and posting timeline
   o Determine how often you would like to post
     o Facebook: 3-4 posts per week
     o Twitter: 2-3 tweets per day
     o YouTube: Once per week
   o Create a resource list for content
     o Resources on your website
     o Key messages from the toolkit
     o Local jurisdictions with related content
     o News clips and videos

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B. Posting recommendations
- o Posts to Facebook should be 250 characters or less
  - o Utilize mixed media for maximum reach: links, photos, videos
  - o Whenever possible, tag another organization to expand reach
- o Post examples for Facebook:
  - o *What to do to make it through: Catastrophes can strike at home, work, in your car, at school or at play – what are you doing to be prepared?*
  - o *What to do to make it through: The top three things that save lives in a disaster are: make a plan; build a kit; lend a hand. How are you getting prepared?*
  - o *Washington is vulnerable to many types of natural disasters and catastrophes. Many local jurisdictions and agencies have resources available online – click the link below for more information*

- o Posts to Twitter have to be 140 characters or less
  - o Utilize mixed media for maximum reach: links, photos, videos
  - o Mention or retweet other users whenever possible
- o Post examples for Twitter:
  - o *Make a plan in case of a disaster or catastrophe. Check out our resources for making a plan: LINK #w2d*
  - o *Do you have a kit with emergency supplies in case of a disaster or catastrophe? What do you keep in it? #w2d*
  - o *Lending a hand to a neighbor, co-worker or friend can be life saving during a disaster. Here are a few ways to help others: LINK #w2d*

- o Videos posted to YouTube must be original content or be attributed to the original source
  - o Keep videos to 2 minutes or less. Audiences have a short attention span on YouTube and you want to keep them engaged
  - o Create a descriptive title, a thorough description and tag any potential keywords that someone would search for to find your video

IV. Best practices
Most users look to social media to get and share what they believe is the latest and greatest information. Here are a few tips to help foster engagement and build your community online:

A. Facebook
  - o Select a custom URL (your Facebook Page's username) that represents your organization (IE: www.facebook.com/citizenpreparedness) by clicking 'Edit Page' from your Facebook Page. Then click on the tab labeled 'Basic Information' and choose your username.

Make sure the default view for your wall (where you and your fans can share posts) shows posts by page and by fans
- o The default landing tab should be the wall or a custom tab that you have made specifically for your organization
- o People who like your page (known as fans on Facebook) should be able to write on your wall, post photos, videos and links
- o Use your agency logo for your page's picture
- o Ask questions to spark conversation and activity on your page
- o If you have lengthy updates to share, create the update in a note and then post to your Facebook wall
- o Use social plug-ins to promote your Facebook page on your website
  - o Social plug-in resources available here: http://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/

B. Twitter
- o Select a username that reflects your organization (IE: @citizenprep)
- o Use your agency logo for your profile picture
- o Create a background that gives more information about your organization and ways to contact you outside of Twitter
- o Establish the right voice for talking to your followers
- o Share photos and behind the scenes info about your organization. Give a glimpse of developing projects and events.
- o Regularly monitor the comments about your agency by creating custom searches for your agency as well as key words that could lead to a user finding you
- o Ask questions to your followers to gain valuable insights and to show that you are listening to what's important to them
- o Respond to compliments and feedback within 24 hours
- o Demonstrate wider leadership and know-how by referencing articles and likes about the bigger picture as it relates to your organization
- o Champion stakeholders by retweeting and publicly replying to great tweets posted by your followers.

C. YouTube
- o Reserve a YouTube URL that matches your website (IE: www.youtube.com/citizenpreparedness)
- o Use your agency logo as your channel's profile picture
- o Add keyword tags to your channel
  - o In your channel settings, add keywords relevant to your agency's mission including your city and state
- o Post videos that are practical and short – viewers are more likely to watch your entire video if it's under 2 minutes long and is engaging.
- o Encourage participation with viewers. YouTube is a search engine but it's also a social media channel so opening up your video to commenting and embedding.

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o   Review your YouTube insights to learn about your demographic and view experiences.

V. Managing social media

It is recommended that agencies develop and implement a basic commenting policy that outlines how to respond to user comments or questions. It's important to address all questions and comments, so having an in-house protocol for responding will help those who are tasked managing the social media accounts. We recommend referencing your agency's communication protocol when developing the social media commenting policy. If your agency does not have one, we can help create one specific to your needs.

Maximizing your efforts in social media while juggling many other projects can be difficult. There are several free or inexpensive tools that can help with management:

I.   Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com)
   o   Customizable dashboard
   o   Manage multiple networks including Facebook and Twitter
   o   Team collaboration (invite others in your organization to help you post)
   o   Schedule posts in advance
   o   Analytics
   o   Mobile app integration with iPhone/iPad, Android and BlackBerry
   o   RSS Integration

II.   Cotweet (www.cotweet.com)
   o   Manages multiple Twitter accounts
   o   Team collaboration with "on duty" assignments
   o   Schedule posts in advance
   o   Analytics

III.   Seesmic (www.seesmic.com)
   o   Customizable dashboard
   o   Manage multiple networks including Facebook & Twitter
   o   Platform available for web, desktop, iPhone, Android and Windows Phone
   o   Schedule posts in advance
   o   Analytics
   o   Translation available

IV.   TweetDeck (www.tweetdeck.com)
   o   Customizable dashboard
   o   Manage multiple networks including Facebook & Twitter
   o   Platform available for desktop, iPhone, iPad and Android
   o   Schedule posts in advance

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VI. Sharing beyond your organization

Once you've created and started sharing great content on your social media channels, you will want to integrate that information on your website and blog if you have one. Here are a few recommendations for integration.

    A. URL Shorteners
- Bit.ly: (www.bit.ly)
  - A free service to customize and shorten links and then view complete, real-time traffic and analytics data.
  - A free service to customize and shorten links without analytics

    B. Facebook integration
- Use social plug-ins to see what your friends have liked, commented on or shared on the web:
  - Like Button – Let users share pages from your site back to their Facebook profile with one click
  - Send Button – Allows users to easily send your content to their friends
  - Recommendations – Give users personalized suggestions for pages on your site they might like
  - Like Box – Enable users to like your Facebook page and view its stream directly from your website
  - Facepile – Displays the Facebook profile pictures of users who have liked your page or have signed up via your site

    C. Twitter integration
- Add buttons to your website to help visitors share content and connect with you on Twitter:
  - Share a link
  - Follow
  - Hashtag
  - Mention
- Create a widget to display Twitter updates on your website or on other social media pages

VII. Evaluation

Using social media as a communication tool will provide great value to your preparedness educational goals and it will be important that you evaluate your progress and make course corrections along the way. Here are a few benchmarks of success for your first 90 days:

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A. Facebook
- Create a Facebook fan page with your agency logo and information
- Share 3 posts per week and get feedback (a like or comment) on each post
- Send an invitation to colleagues, partner organizations and the community to like the page
- Get to 100 "likes"

B. Twitter
- Create a Twitter account and use your agency logo for the profile picture
- Write a short bio about your agency and/or dpeartment and also provide a link to your website
- Tweet twice per day – once sharing information about your agency and the other responding or retweeting another user
- Follow 100 people
- Get to 50 followers

C. YouTube
- Create a YouTube channel with your agency information and logo
- Share a video and also post to Facebook and Twitter