emergency communication strategies
part 1: setting the stage

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What **communication vehicles/tactics** has your municipality used in an emergency?

Inventory

Inventory all the **communications vehicles** available:

- **Website**

- **Media**
  - ✓ online & print newspapers, radio, tv, social media

- **Direct notices to public**
  - ✓ Email, text, robo calls

- **Indirect notices to public**
  - ✓ Sign boards, fliers, community posting boards

- **Word of mouth**
  - ✓ CERT, community networks, route alert warning systems

Inventory (con't)

Consider your **audience**:

- Community stakeholders

- Law enforcement contacts

- Media contacts

- Special facility liasons

- Other key stakeholders

Inventory (con't)

- Advertise the use of these communication vehicles as information for the event

- Prepare a written Incident Press Release, (IPR), so there are no discrepancies.

Major media hubs love attention grabbing headlines, for example of an Ocean County OEM press releases read:

- "At this time, Ocean County Office of Emergency Management is reporting no fatalities as a result of Hurricane Sandy"

CNN's Translation:

- "First responders in Ocean County are still unsure of the death toll from Hurricane Sandy"

Media will transform your IPR and messages into what sells for them.

Social Media

- An agency involved in Emergency Services should have a Facebook Page and/or a Twitter account.

  - Posts on these pages should only be made by the designated person in the plan.

- 99% of the public, looks to "official" FB pages or outlets for what is really happening in real time. In an incident like Sandy, when power runs out & generators run out, and people are cut-off from the outside world, panic sets in.

- People communicate with each other on Social Media, they will assist others through social media.

Where Adults "Live" Online:

- Facebook: 71%
  - 1.26 Billion users worldwide
  - 128 Million visit daily (in the US alone)
  - Fairly gender neutral
- LinkedIn: 22%
  - 227+ Million users
- Pinterest: 21%
  - 70+ Million users; 80% women
- Twitter: 18%
  - 645 Million users; 243 Million monthly active users
- Instagram: 17%
  - 150+ Million users

Channel / Population Matchup
demographics

- Gen-X (in 2014, age 38-48)
  - Best educated: 29% have college degrees
  - 41+- million
- Millennials (in 2014, age 20-32)
  - Digital natives: never lived w/o techology
  - 71+- million
- Gen-X, Millennials don't read email. They text, chat online.
- Social demographics
  - 23% use Twitter; Urban, College grads, under 50
  - Age 65 and older: 56% use Facebook
  - 26% use Instagram; 53% of 18-29 year olds
  - 28% use Pinterest; 42% of online women use it
  - 28% use LinkedIn; College grads, high income, unemployed use growing
  - *Source: Pew Research Center*

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Understand Device Usage
demographics

Mobile Growth:

- Smartphone growth has been in double digit percentages for several years.

- 55% of US citizens have a smartphone

- 13% of Hispanics, 12% of blacks are smart-phone dependent (no broadband connection)

- 42% of US citizens have a tablet

- 189 Million Facebook users are mobile only

- Tablet growth, year over year, 2012-13 was 87.1%. 2014-2015 just 2.1%

- Yankee Group predicts 1 billion tablets to ship in 2017.

- 1.2 billion smartphones sold in the US in 2014

Social Media & Disasters

- Followed by television and local radio, the internet is the third most popular way for people to gather emergency information with 18 % of both the general and the online population specifically using Facebook for that purpose.

- Nearly a fourth (24 %) of the general population and a third (31%) of the online population would use social media to let loved ones know they are safe.

- Eighty percent of the general and 69 % of the online populations surveyed believe that national emergency response organizations should regularly monitor social media sites in order to respond promptly.

- For those who would post a request for help through social media, 39 % of those polled online and 35 % of those polled via telephone said they would expect help to arrive in less than one hour.

Crisis Communications: why you should use social media when disaster strikes SMI, April 2012

Is Social Media Acceptable?

- Depending on who delivers the message, it can reach hundreds, or thousands in seconds.

- It delivers a non ambiguous, direct message, not clouded by media hype.

- It comes directly from a credible source such as the County Sheriffs, County OEM, or local Police Department.

Pros & Cons of Social Media

Downfalls:

- Be cognizant of people's feelings and emotional state when posting.

- Cathy's Law- NJ S199

Pros:

- It has direct contact to your residents as soon as you post content.

- It takes out any ambiguity that may come from "word of mouth" communications.

Things to Consider

- Which social channels will you use?

- What will be the process, the flow?

- What will your policies say?

- How (or will) you market social media?

- How will you engage visitors?

- Will you post other than government information?

- How will you handle records retention?

- Do you need to address employee use as part of your plan?

Things to Consider

Remember to:

- Know and periodically review your demographics.
- Adopt "Use" and "Commenting" policies.
- Adopt an internal policy to control social channel creation.
- Be aware of copyright issues. Share, don't copy.
- Have multiple administrators for each application.
- Monitor your channels. Not doing so is like picking up the phone and not talking.
- Designate editors and moderators for social channels.
- Never let fans / followers upload photos or videos without moderation.
- Use a social media dashboard like Hootsuite.com

General Challenges You'll Face Online

- Going where no man has gone before.
- The speed of government.
- Too much noise. Too many products.
- Bleeding edge: Is anyone using it?
- Legal hurdles
    - Terms of Service Agreements
    - Credit Cards / Purchasing
    - Commenting Policies:
        - What others can say on your sites
        - What you can say and how to say it on your own sites
        - What your representatives can / should say on other sites
        - See Facebook.com/MorrisCountyNJ Commenting Policy
- Copyright Infringement
- Engagement
    - Increase public participation
    - Ensure the accuracy and quality of data
    - Add value

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Other Populations to Consider

- Tourists

- Resident or non-resident employees

- Unaccompanied minors

- Homeless

- Disabled, seniors, hospital or nursing home patients

- Commuters

- Populations with limited English proficiency

- College students

- Others specific to your community

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Reach Vulnerable Populations

- Identify vulnerable populations in your community
- Determine appropriate methodologies to communicate with these populations
  - Sign language
  - Web translation services
  - Video with transcripts
- ADA Compliance
  - Web, social media, video coming under scrutiny by USDOJ
  - Civil rights issue; local gov'ts have been ordered to comply
  - Never use scanned PDFs. Not readable by adaptive devices
  - Always consider color contrast online and in print

Reach Vulnerable Populations

- Have a prominent link to NJ's Register Ready on web. Put out notices with a link to it on social media.
  - http://www.ready.nj.gov/plan/special_needs7.html
  - Free, voluntary, confidential
- Partner with local agencies and faith-based organizations serving these populations
- Identify and engage with local ethnic media
- Engage with these populations to determine their needs and the best ways to communicate with them
- Provide workshops or webinars ahead of time to individuals, agencies, and service providers
- Exercise planned communications methodologies
- Use available resources
  - http://www.diversitypreparedness.org/

Case Study

Washington Township, Morris County NJ

Summary

- Why use social media
  Because citizens live in this space

- Know your demographics. Serve your entire community.
  Choose social channels by community demographics
  Remember traditional channels: newspaper, web, email, phone
  Specifically address vulnerable populations

- What should be posted
  Official government information: FACTS

- Plan. Plan. Plan.
  Design, staff, training, voice, policies

- Implement.
  Broadly market your program
  Post. Monitor. Reply.

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1. **Emergency Communications Planning** (*coming soon*)
   - ✓ Develop a standard operating procedure outlining the steps a town will take to disseminate important information during emergencies
   - ✓ Utilize varied communications channels (traditional & digital media, text and email, sign boards, community posting boards & community networks)
   - ✓ Create a process for citizens to register for alerts

2. **Vulnerable Populations Identification for Emergencies**
   - ✓ Create or utilize an existing database of all vulnerable and special needs populations within the community to receive updates during emergencies
   - ✓ Keep a list of key stakeholders that can help get word out to special needs pops
   - ✓ Use of alternative communication formats for people w/ special needs
   - ✓ Create a system for special needs people to register for updates

Resources

- Crisis Communications
  - Seeger, Matthew (2006) Best Practices in Crisis Communication: An Expert Panel Process
  - Pierce, B. (2012) Crisis Communications Planning. Tipping Point Public, Relations November 8, 2012
- Census Data
  - Check your county planning board
    Example: http://morrisplanning.org/data.asp
  - US Census Bureau: Census.gov
    Example: http://www.census.gov/popest/data/index.html
- Media Use Data
  - Pew Research Center
    Example: http://www.pewinternet.org/topics/social-media/
  - Newspapers
    Example: http://www.naa.org/Trends-and-Numbers/Readership.aspx
- Digital Marketing Stats
  - Expanded Ramblings: http://expandedramblings.com/
  - HubSpot: http://www.hubspot.com/marketing-statistics