emergency communication strategies
part 1: setting the stage

OUR SPEAKERS

Chris Aldrich (@)
Deputy Fire Coordinator, Ocean County, Zone 4

Carol Spencer (@CarolSpencerNJ)
Digital & Communications Consultant, StormZero, LLC

Andrew Coppola (@WashingtonTwp)
Township Administrator, Washington Twp
Communications Vehicles

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

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*
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 smartphone 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
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
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.
  • 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
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

  Design, staff, training, voice, policies

• Implement.
  Broadly market your program
new sustainable jersey actions

communications

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

• 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

• Digital Marketing Stats
  • Expanded Ramblings: http://expandedramblings.com/
  • HubSpot: http://www.hubspot.com/marketing-statistics