



# 2013 National Capital Region *Social Media in Emergencies Summit*



*Aug. 13, 2013  
Held at The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.*



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For regional news and information, visit [www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov](http://www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov).

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## Welcome to the 2013 NCRsmem Summit



*Merni Fitzgerald, chair of R-ESF 15, (above) and Greg Shaw, Co-Director of the GWU Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management (below) welcomed everyone to the summit.*



*Greg Shaw, Co-Director, GWU Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management, welcomed summit attendees to the campus of The George Washington University and spoke about the Institute.*

“We are ... within the engineering school and in 1998 developed a grad program in emergency management, one of the few at the time. Now there are about 200 programs nationwide. What sets us apart is the fact that we are in an engineering school; we teach in the evening and cater to those who have full or part-time employment.”

Approximately 150 people from across the National Capital Region gathered on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2013, to discuss and discover solutions for the use of social media during emergencies in the D.C., Virginia and Maryland area. The conversation also took place on Twitter using the hashtag #NCRsmem.

The summit opened with the video, “Sometimes a Revolution Can Begin Suddenly.” The video, narrated by Carl Quintanilla, highlighted how social media spread the news about “The Miracle on the Hudson.”

**Merni Fitzgerald**, chair of Regional Emergency Support Function (R-ESF) 15: External Affairs welcomed attendees.

“Social media is important. Everyone is a reporter. In the past 15 years while R-ESF 15 has organized us loosely, we’ve had the sniper, Hurricane Sandy, locusts, all kinds of horrible events and through it all, we have communicated using the tools of the time.

“So we’re here today to talk about social media and its many uses, challenges and opportunities during emergencies – be they large-scale incidents like a derecho storm, Snowmageddons and terrorism or smaller scale yet significant events like arson, localized flooding and fires,” Fitzgerald stated.



*Greg Licamele, summit organizer, was the emcee for the day and kept the event on track and on time!*

### Did You Know?

*The 2013 Social Media in Emergencies Summit is the second annual event. It was designed for public information officers, emergency managers and public safety communications personnel throughout the National Capital Region.*



## Digital Volunteers

By Gloria Huang, American Red Cross

In 2010 there was the Haiti earthquake, we realized the power of our social community when we managed to raise \$35 million through text donations, primarily through Twitter. People were providing feedback, asking questions, how do we help, what can we do from home to help the people from Haiti besides just giving a donation?

The Red Cross didn't have something immediately to answer that. We were also seeing cries for help. People getting word from someone who was trapped. There wasn't much we could do but it spurred us to think about what to do with information we get from community members; data from the ground was so unstructured and unpredictable; how can we act on it?

We did three surveys from 2010 to 2012 asking people how they used information during emergencies and how significant social media was. After TV and radio, social media was third most.

We found that **people expected help to arrive within three hours of a tweet or Facebook post.** But no one had the capacity to do that.

After a tornado, we saw retweets about Henryville High School being destroyed. As we watched posts coming in, we saw a lot about Henryville High School so we told volunteers to get to Henryville to connect with people on the ground and communicate with media. That was the first 'aha' moment.

We were acting proactively before anything was confirmed. It helped us be more nimble.

In a disaster, communications increase exponentially. **It's not just about having the tool but being able to use it and scale it and give people a chance to get involved.**

We encouraged the use of personal accounts; told people to be upfront about how you are connected to the Red Cross. We had built in social network with Red Crossers who were passionate. We looked at how we would take this robust tool and spin it into a response to a disaster. The most common inquiries – how can I get help, how can I stay safe, what can I do to help my neighbors? We wanted to have everyone ready to address these questions.

We took a look at how to bring together the existing community to

*continued on next page*

*We have had a social media program since 2006, after Hurricane Katrina. We decided someone should be able to make the bloggers stop saying bad things about us.*

*Wendy Harman started looking at what was out there and found that 90 percent of what people were saying was positive, whether about blood donations or CPR course; we needed a social media platform to publicize the positive.*

*Plan, plan, plan... but measure and adjust constantly. Start small and controlled but consider moving to more distributed sharing of responsibilities.*

### Did You Know?

65 percent of this year's attendees were new to the social media summit.



*Gloria Huang, American Red Cross*

train them, some of whom had no experience with disasters. We found that everyone was really enthusiastic about learning best practices; there was a huge hunger for that because they wanted to feel prepared.

We wanted to build a resilient community. We wanted to increase day to day social engagement, not just in disasters.

We worked with trusted volunteers first and then rolled it out to more people. It took about a year to get there. We were able to get the information into

reports but are still working to improve it.

Plan, plan, plan... but measure and adjust constantly. Start small and controlled but consider moving to more distributed sharing of responsibilities.

Developing the training – prepare volunteers to answer questions. Arm them with tactics of interaction – interact online; avoid getting angry; talk about emergency-specific tactics, what's different, things to be mindful of, emotional state of people; think about how to interact in disasters.

Include psychological first aid and mental health tips – put yourself in the other's shoes; help them feel better, like they're in control.

We figured out a process for own team. Send out mass email to volunteers, sign up for four-hour shifts, interact with people, categorize posts. Then staff was responsible for putting that in situational reports.

It became a huge deal during Hurricane Sandy. We had about 30 digital volunteers; 2.5 million posts during two months of Sandy. It took everything we could muster to handle all the posts, hundreds a day.

The key takeaway: controlled settings of everyone reporting to central Red Cross wasn't working. We had them triage information among themselves. Afterward they found a system to categorize responses and deliver services. It was the first time connecting people getting posts with service on the ground.

We'll use digital volunteers to address spontaneous groups. People are self-organizing; the Red Cross needs to be involved and address questions.

We plan to take the volunteer program to the next level so all chapters can have a network of trainers and digital volunteers.



## Did You Know?

*The American Red Cross has had a social media program since 2006.*



## Panel Discussion

Panel facilitated by Sara Cohen of G&H International with members of the Department of Homeland Security's Virtual Social Media Working Group

### Did You Know?

FEMA had over 40 people working just on digital media during Hurricane Sandy.

**Allison Cerra, New York City Office of Emergency Management**, communications and new media specialist and a member of the NYC Social Media Advisory and Research Taskforce (SMART).

We have a coastal storm playbook, certain agencies we work with; when the storm was coming, we started talking with them. When the power went out, we spoke with those groups, 24 hours in EOC. We created a flyer to give residents - your power is out, this is what you need to do to get it restored. You can't always rely on social media and may have to go back to traditional methods.

Inappropriate tone (i.e., exclamations and all caps) was avoided per the social media emergency protocol. Our CMAS message to shelter in place, however, featured "caps" to underscore the severity of the message.

Let the managers at the EOC know what the messages that should be communicated.

**Jason Lindesmith, FEMA Social Media Lead**

"As Hurricane Sandy was making its way up the east coast and getting more serious, we tapped into our regional social media leads (10 regions). We also had help from DHS public affairs as well. We ended up having 9-10 people some days

working on digital media, mostly related to monitoring.

"We found a lot of misinformation and needed to do something to combat it. It doesn't work in a vacuum so we had to integrate with all other avenues that FEMA uses - TV, radio, print, partners, etc. Rumor control was an amalgamation of different sources. There was a digital full court press. We created a page on FEMA.gov and on mobile site of rumors we were seeing along with corresponding true statement. We used very clear visual cues (red x's for 'false' and green checkmarks for 'true') so people could scan.

"In the National Capital Region, you get national attention and will get a lot of attention on your websites, media, etc. There's so much government here, it's a unique characteristic that isn't present in LA or Miami. Knocking down walls of approval will be harder with so much government. We also found with Hurricane Sandy ... that you need to understand the fabric of D.C., Md., Va. - how do people get their sense of community? How are you going to relate to people talking about where they are from."



Left to right: Sara Cohen (moderator) and panelists Chris Thompson, Jason Lindesmith and Allison Cerra.

**Chris Thompson, Humanity Road (nonprofit charity)**

"Social media has a predictable cycle end to end.

After Sandy made landfall more than 42 spontaneous Crowdmaps emerged.

"There needs to be standardization of data; where to get gas, etc. An emergency manager needs different data. After seven days of no power in Rockaway, finding fuel for generators was a challenge and they also needed food, shelter and other supplies. Humanity Road deployed communications and trained local spontaneous volunteers.

The community managed their daily high priority donation needs by using paper and social media. So the key message on that was we helped them get the ability to communicate their own needs. It's a whole community approach. The government can't do it all. It takes private, nonprofits, churches, etc."

# Spark Presentations



Mark Brady

## Media Relations via Social Media

**Mark Brady, Prince George's County Fire Department**

This really equates to relationships with the media - creating relationships with the media as opposed to public relations to get the word out the public. Have you talked to the local media about who you are and what your tweet handle is?

“Social media is a tool like a fax machine of the 80s. You don't even know how far a message goes out.”



## Did You Know?

All social media platforms evolve. Pinterest is still new. We don't know what it will become, but we do know that people currently using the platform are taking direct action (buying items) based on what they see.

Bob Speidenner

## Using Pinterest

**Bob Spieldenner, Virginia Department of Emergency Management**

“It's all about the visuals, graphics.”

Pinterest helped us reevaluate how we presented products. We recently redesigned the Virginia Hurricane Evacuation Guide focusing on how people communicate, what visuals they are attracted to.

An example in Virginia is the hurricane preparedness sales tax holiday – we showed visuals of what can you buy, give people ideas (generators, water, etc.).



Bob Spieldenner





# Boston Marathon Bombings: The Role of Social Media in the Response

By John Daley, Deputy Commissioner, Boston Police Department

## Did You Know?

The Boston Police Department created a blog – BPDNews.com – in 2004, and registered its Twitter account in 2008.

*“April 15, 2013 – with the explosions, we were very busy. With thousands in the area, we needed to get information out quickly and went to a unified command center.”*

TV stations were still covering the race. There was a disconnect; they needed to get something out on social media about the explosions but struggled with conflicting reports and information.

As they shut down a densely

*It’s a continuing education; try to integrate it into everyday business – keep the connection; it’s not a one-way street, it’s a dialogue; expand the use of Twitter beyond the staff; listen to what people are saying, strive to be part of the community; there’s a difference between monitoring and listening.*



John Daley

populated business district, the cell phone network was pretty much out of business although data traffic was getting through. Daley said the Boston Police Department sent out assignments as text messages, a first for some of the older officers.

As they were communicating, they began to ask over social media if people had photos. The Crimestopper tipline became inundated. They then passed on FBI phone line number and that was inundated. They weren’t ready for the massive amount of digital information people were sending. Thousands were trying to send videos on smartphones.

They provided updates on the investigation and continued to solicit videos and photos despite the challenges. Saw that a suspect had been identified, would be arrested, was arrested, on the way to the courthouse – not true. CNN was saying this and AP confirmed it. Crowd gathered at courthouse. Things were getting out of hand. They had to stop irresponsible media frenzy.

He tweeted that there was not an arrest; it was retweeted 10,000 times. This was an important moment; demonstrated how to cut through false information.

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## Social Media Background in Boston, Mass.

Back in 2004, the Boston PD was getting beat up in the media about violence in neighborhoods. We were doing all the right things and getting positive results but the word wasn't getting out. It was almost as if the media thought we were getting too much good press. So the Police Commissioner told the IT people to put good information out on our site but updates were taking weeks rather than hours.

So they found a 'lightweight' content management system to set up their own BPDNews.com domain, one of the first in the country. At first, it was bare bones with crime stats.

The fact that it wasn't a dot.gov site gave them a little more freedom. Since it was a blog instead of a static website, they linked to stories in the media about crime and curated stories about crime.

They also corrected inaccuracies. Sometimes reporters defended their stories on the blog.

Recognizing the power of the blog, they stopped putting news releases out. Now no reporters got special treatment. Everyone got information at the same time. One-upmanship was diminished which reduced the tone of negativity.

The mainstream media did everything they could to diminish the blog. They registered their Twitter account in 2008 (also knew LA had one) and started putting things out about road closures, crime. There were concerns about raw data that might turn out to be inaccurate. It did happen and they did post some things prematurely but didn't have many followers at the beginning.

*"A large part is reputation – the public has to have confidence in integrity, fairness. You cannot completely control the message but you can try to shape it." John Daley, Boston Police Dept.*

They knew they were an important source of information that was playing out for the world.

The next challenge was release of photos of the brothers; they wanted wide distribution. Their website was routinely crashing. As soon as the FBI made the images public, BPD put them out on social media. This prompted the suspects to make quick moves. Within six hours of photo release, they were pinned down.

Once again, they were overwhelmed with conflicting information. By the early



*Look, it's @DeputyDaley from @Boston\_Police! Love that accent. #NCRsmem pic.twitter.com/h4ozUCpFVY By @jgarrow (Jim Garrow)*

morning, one was dead, the other was missing.

Boston PD happily tweeted out the good news when the suspect was in custody. It was re-tweeted over 143,000 times.

**Q:** You didn't use hashtags, was that deliberate?

**A:** Yes, I'm not a fan of hashtags; everyone knew we were talking about the Boston bombing.

**Q:** Since you mentioned the challenge of collecting the data of the video, in the future, would you consider some crowd-sourcing?

**A:** We're looking at publishing a social media guide for citizens and when an incident happens, we'll send an email address right away and publicize that.



### Did You Know?

*The Boston PD's social media feeds were a credible source of information, at one point correcting CNN which had erroneously reported that a suspect had been arrested and was on the way to the courthouse.*



## Talking Health in a Social Age

Jim Garrow, Philadelphia Health Department

*“When an emergency happens, you usually think about fire or guns or blood. Public health emergency is different and the response is different. It’s not like your traditional emergency; generally it doesn’t look like anything.”*



Jim Garrow

### Did You Know?

Garrow does heat walks during heat waves. He walks around downtown and take pictures of people doing things to stay cool. Then he uses social media to tell followers. For example, “Buy cold water” and show stands selling water.

Public health emergencies are different in four ways: 1) no alarms, 2) worldwide scope, 3) slow burn and 4) sometimes there is no emergency.

With no fire bells to alert us, public health has to look for problems using tools like Google Flu Trends, Foodborne Chicago and FluNearYou.

A disease outbreak in Shanghai is just as worrisome to U.S. public health as a local fire is to a fire chief. Diseases like H7N9 influenza and MERS-coronavirus are things we have to keep an eye on.

Disease outbreaks don’t happen all at once, MERS-coronavirus has been around for a year and Ebola's been around for 40

*Be interesting...  
move emergency  
messaging into  
everyday situations.*

years. Are they ongoing emergencies, or just day-to-day business?

Public health has to be concerned with the worried well, too. Too many of them and your emergency is compounded. H1N1 influenza showed us that when Philly’s emergency departments were swamped with people who thought they had the flu, but didn’t.

There isn’t always a countermeasure to public health emergencies, so we have to communicate protective measures and hope people implement them.

For people to do what we say, we have to available, appropriate and timely. We do this by messaging through multiple means, writing at an appropriate grade level and into multiple languages, and being active in the community to build trust.

Every day, we need to work to change minds and behavior, not just focus on “responding.”

Public health departments need to work to cut through the cacophony of messages out there to make sure that the

*continued on next page*



public hears us. We can do that by being different, interesting and timely.

Be different, Philly Health does “heat walks” that highlight healthy hot weather practices.

Be interesting, with a funny “WashYourHandsington” video from Washington Department of Health.

Be timely, you can’t take two weeks to tell people not to buy gas masks to protect themselves from anthrax in the mail.

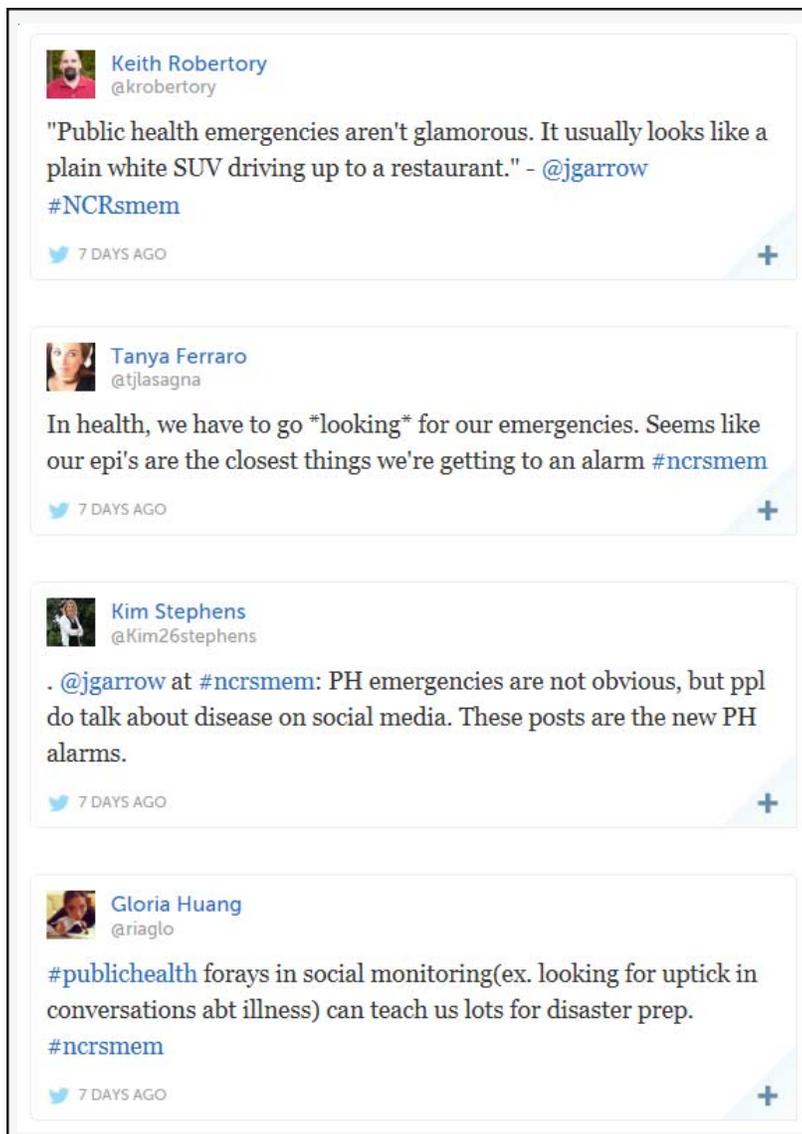
Concerns during the emergency: 1) rumors and misinformation, 2) stigmatization and 3) stay in your lane.

Rumors and misinformation can derail an entire response, like people saying they’ve been negatively affected by a vaccine Health is recommending.

Groups that are associated with a disease outbreak have been stigmatized and suffered real physical, mental and economic harm. Social media will only make that worse due to online anonymity.

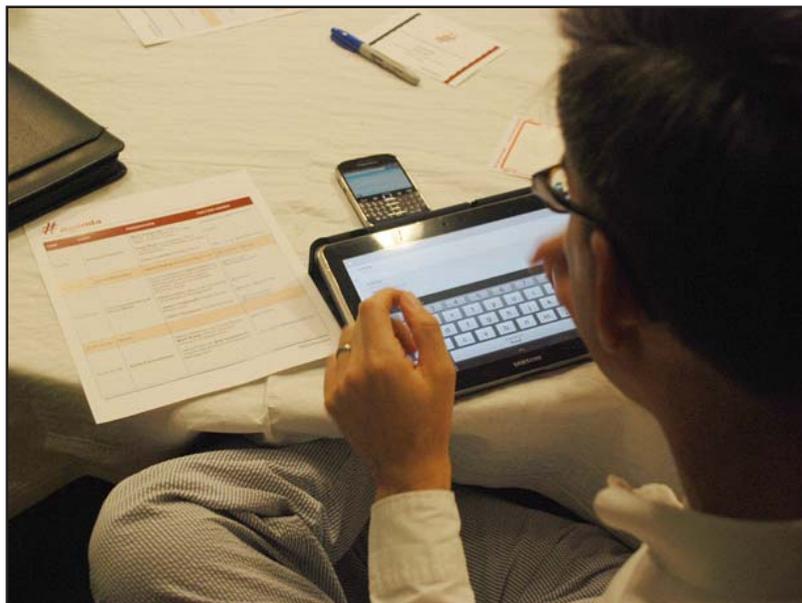
It’s important for public health to stay in their lane and support first responder agencies. During a hurricane, support their public safety messages; after the storm, it’s all public health all the time.

Social media is part of everything we do. The only way we can get ahead of these slow burn problems is to have an ear to the ground.



## Did You Know?

There is a slow burn to public health emergencies. This is different from police and fire.



Multiple communications devices were the norm for the day.



## Spark Presentations

### Building an Emergency Social Network

**Alicia Johnson, San Francisco Emergency Management**

*Focus on SF72.org (Recorded Video)*

Make it less about fear and prompt people to put in the effort to be prepared. "You're more prepared than you think you are."



Visit the website [SF72.org](http://SF72.org) to watch the video.

### Did You Know?

Live streaming video can be done from your EOC and embedded on your website or blog.



Kasey Parr

### The Art of Livestreaming Video

**Kasey Parr, Maryland Emergency Management Agency**

Why use livestream:

- Convenience
- Realtime situation updates
- Transparency
- Expand your audience
- No downloading necessary
- Watch live events
- Get notification of new broadcasts
- Broadcast live – integrates with Facebook and Twitter
- Commenting
- Sharing – embed video directly to your site or blog

In Maryland, they use it for governor's briefings. They don't need news crews to film and can do it in the middle of the night.

Tools of the trade

- HD camera
- Good computer
- Microphone
- Tripod
- USB cables

The most expensive thing to buy is the black magic box to go live.

## Spark Presentations

### Publishing a Digital Newspaper

**Bill Delaney, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue**

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue is using *www.paper.li*.

This is a platform to show social media and have a digital newspaper for those who don't use social media.

They update it once a week (can choose different options for updates). It allows them to grab great stories that the media runs on MCFR blog (<http://mcfrc.blogspot.com>) and news sources.



Above: A screen shot of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Paper.li page.

Below: Bill Delaney



The site can be set up to automatically grab your tweets (or anyone else's you designate), posts to blogs and a few other social media sites. You can use a widget in your web browser to manually grab content off of other sites you do not otherwise designate automatically. E.g. saw a nice article on the Washington Post site about the department, etc.



Jason Lindesmith

### Using Trusted and Untrusted Updates as a Resource

**Jason Lindesmith, FEMA Social Media Lead**

Social Hub lives on FEMA.gov.

- They curate trusted accounts, especially during emergencies.
- There is a collection of visuals in a way that people can engage.
- There are feeds from the weather service. Click on dot on map to see latest updates
- Untrusted sources – crowdsource, Disaster Reporter on Android platform and iPhone.
- Another option to provide crowdsource information. Drop photo and description in Disaster Reporter with GPS coordinates if they have locator on.
- Content is moderated before publication. Reviewed to see if true disaster can be a house fire. Content on map is available as an API.
- [www.Fema.gov/social-hub](http://www.Fema.gov/social-hub)
- [m.fema.gov/social-hub](http://m.fema.gov/social-hub)
- [www.fema.gov/disaster-reports](http://www.fema.gov/disaster-reports)



### Did You Know?

Paper.li is a free tool that allows you to create an online newspaper of aggregated content on your subject area or topic.



# Nano News – Understanding the New News Environment

By Gerald Baron

*“Nano news is realtime, happening anywhere in the world through the incredible power of the Internet.”*

Who is the face of news today? Mostly not known. Different from Walter Cronkite era. Could be *jpdeathblade* – a Reddit user posting after the bombings in Boston.

You can't be fast enough. By the time you get through news releases and approved, it's already out there.

It happens on the Internet first, Twitter in particular, e.g., Miracle on the Hudson.

Most of that is incorrect, especially early on.

Most of the wrong is corrected. If you are the only one with the truth, you have to get it out fast or a rumor continues.

Fix the approval process. If it takes hours, you are dead in the water. How did Boston Police do it? The person to give the approvals was the person who was tweeting, John Daley

Separate facts from messages. Facts should not need legal approval but messages with official organization positions, should come from those authorized to make them.

Rumor management should be job #1. CNN had wrong information. You have to monitor diligently and have an approval process that recognizes the importance of rumor correction.



Watch the video online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpCuXTQOWak](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpCuXTQOWak)

Engage with those most important. Think about key stakeholders. Be transparent and honest.

If you go as an executive in emergency management to an elected official, you have to show them how the media are getting news, show reporters using Twitter. Show them that



Gerald Baron

the news media are not waiting for a news release; they are waiting to see what you say on Twitter.

The younger generation coming up, we are seeing younger people taking stronger roles in this change.

How are we going to control it [social media]? That whole idea of control belongs to the Walter era; we can't control it. That's why I emphasize two things: rumor management – if we have access to the correct information, we must quickly correct the misinformation. The other part in terms of control is what does it matter what the others are saying except as it affects your organization?

We're forgetting that we have the ability to go directly to the key stakeholders not just when there's an event.

## Did You Know?

SMEM stands for Social Media in Emergencies. Follow that hashtag on Twitter all of the time and #smemchat on Friday's at 12:30 p.m.

*Gerald Baron presented a video to conference attendees on "Nano News," followed by a live Google Hangout featuring a Q&A session with those in attendance.*

**Q:** Rumor control is incredibly important; some people wonder how to go about referencing the information to correct, in the old days, different places had different policies. Do you repeat the incorrect information or simply state the correct information?

**A:** It sort of depends on the nature of the rumor and the source. If it's widespread on social media, you may not know the source, but generally it's good to reference the incorrect information.

**Q:** Culture is also a big piece of changing – what advice can you give us about changing culture?

**A:** Raise your hand if you have a problem with your approval process? [About 75% raised their hands.] Some clients called for release of every piece of information to be approved by Headquarters. That is not going to work.

I was disappointed not to be able to hear Deputy Commissioner Daley and I would have liked to hear how they tweeted the information during the Boston Bombing. Having the Deputy Commissioner tweeting was a good approach.

One is separate response facts from organizational messages – send the former out without approval, but have the highest level of approval for the second. Or follow the model of Boston Police and have the person with the highest level of approval or stand next to them and do the tweets.



**Thanks for attending  
the 2013 Social Media in  
Emergencies Summit.**

## Did You Know?

The video Gerald Baron presented at the summit is online at <http://youtu.be/PpQuXTQOWak>





### Did You Know?

The 2013 Social Media in Emergencies Summit was the second annual event. Be sure to attend the 2014 event.

**Diana Sun** @dianasunVA  
@deputyDALEY: Social media robbed the Boston bombers of time.  
#NCRsmem #hsfuture  
7 DAYS AGO

**jlisle** @jlisle  
Photos of bombing suspects were shared via vast networks of Facebook and Twitter so websites wouldn't be overloaded.  
#ncrsmem  
7 DAYS AGO

**DisasterGirl** @tikimeg  
@deputydaley at #NCRsmem: There's a difference between monitoring and listening. Listening is critical to our business.  
@Boston\_Police  
7 DAYS AGO

**Kim Stephens** @Kim26stephens  
. @deputyDALEY at #ncrsmem: Crowdsourcing may have negative connotations but we have to listen. Listening is critical.  
7 DAYS AGO



## Working Lunch with Group Discussion

See the answers/discussion results starting on Page 18



**1.** Regional coordination is critical to success in the National Capital Region and for your organization. In your professional role or simply as a resident, what are some ideas we can work on together to improve social media effectiveness during emergencies within our community?

**2.** What are the pros/cons of using regional/local hashtags on Twitter? For example, Montgomery and Fairfax counties have started using #mocosstorm and #ffxstorm to help localize information monitoring. In day to day use, it's common for people in Richmond to use #rva. How can we consider using hashtags more effectively?

**3.** In the context of social media response, what would you do (or expect) in the first five minutes, 30 minutes and 60 minutes of a major incident affecting the NCR such as Hurricane Sandy, an incident at the Marine Corps Marathon, or say, the sniper shootings (if they happened in a social media era vs. 2002)?

**4.** Describe a unique way your organization has used social media to monitor or engage before, during or after an incident. Or, have you noticed a unique way an organization used social media during a crisis?

**5.** It is likely that a regional public information officer position will be funded through grant money (although there is no guarantee of funds beyond the first year). This position would be based in Fairfax County, but it would serve the region. In what ways could this regional PIO serve the interests of the entire NCR, especially with regard to social media and emergencies?

**6.** What's one non-government example of excellent social media use we could learn lessons from for emergencies?





## Working Lunch Notes

**Question #1: Regional coordination is critical to success in the National Capital Region and for your organization. In your professional role or simply as a resident, what are some ideas we can work on together to improve social media effectiveness during emergencies within our community?**

- There needs to be an attempt to create a “regional voice” for events and situations within the NCR that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Establish regional hashtags ahead of time for events that is pre-established and advertised in the community.
- Create centralized space for general information across the region that directs to more specific details that apply to smaller geographic areas.
- Leverage existing end users to promote sm usage.
- Ensure multiple communication channels.
- Address challenges with having multiple regions within the NCR.
- Develop a consensus on social media usage.
- Have a central repository - Virtual Joint Information Center (JIC)
- Building regional strength. Opportunity for more practicing opportunities (even if it’s a tabletop). Can use “fake” sites...or just using flipcharts on the wall. Humanity Road has created cards with images and the associated message for Twitter etc.
- More training; more you play together, better it will go. Simulation Deck is a social media training tool (for profit).
- Liked Bob’s use of Pinterest.
- Use downtime to build up tools/content areas in Pinterest....then the material is there, in place WHEN the emergency happens. (like Bob’s VDEM Pinterest site.
- Could digital volunteers be regional PIOs who help support another jurisdiction (who are digital/social media specialists).
- Did you know? FEMA has a defined DIgital Communication Specialist position. (it’s ultimately a skillset vs. a title)
- FEMA social media training — no cost to end user — is available.
- Could local university students be tapped to help as volunteers? OR perhaps better, students in OTHER locations...maybe different time zones, for example. Digital Mutual Aid??? (Instead of sending digital PIO to Baltimore to Alaska...instead have someone work remotely) OR, could the mutual aide.
- In Richmond other localities not coordinating the message with the lead agency. Need to coordinate with all regional partners beforehand. Meet, get to know one another and who key players are. For large scale perhaps implement a JIC. Small scale need to defer to lead agency.
- Improve coordination of communication to identify sources and platforms of information to best present information in a useful and easily accessible way for the public.
- Managing expectations. Let folks know in advance when the emergency happens what they can expect.
- Getting to know each other. Regional groups with distribution lists.
- Posting messages that may affect people in your area.
- Hashtags use up your characters. But how do you start a hashtag? What is going to be official?
- For a major incident, it’s the best time to use a hashtag. Day-to-day is not necessary to use hashtags.
- Can use other methods such as text alerts to blast out information.

- What people need to know is where to get information.
- Let people know that you are there are a resource, even when there is not an emergency.
- Regional coordination ideas: need improved coordination between government and utilities or private organizations during disasters, such as for power outages, etc. One map with all information for the public would be useful. As residents in DC region, we are more apt to go to governments for official information – and if we don't find it we will go to other sources. Coordination would help with that.
- Interaction between localities, sharing issues and what's going on. Coordinate beyond or before the emergency - better use RESF 15 to build connections maybe in other locations to share traffic burden. Coordinate preparedness before the event.
- Start reaching out to transportation agencies, police departments, your colleagues in nearby jurisdictions to have relationships already established before a crisis.
- Common message, many voices. One message, many mediums.
- Share hashtags w/neighboring police depts for example to ensure same message. i.e. PGPD calls Fairfax PD & says use #DCSniper.
- RT neighboring agencies/department's message to become a force multiplier.
- Preempting volunteer teams (VOST). Build recognition all the time, prior to emergencies. Market accounts and hashtags.
- Participation in regional drills in area – ID counterparts in area.
- Learn incident command system NIMS.
- Community – social media guide or social media “socials,” how to engage, how to sign up.
- Seek out other jurisdictions to model and monitor, see how they're using new technologies.
- Recognizing trends and using.
- To create a group of digital volunteers that are tasked with the effective management of streams of data or information, dispelling rumors or misinformation and monitors incident related tweets.

**Question #2: What are the pros/cons of using regional/local hashtags on Twitter? For example, Montgomery and Fairfax counties have started using #mocostorm and #ffxstorm to help localize information monitoring. In day to day use, it's common for people in the Richmond area to use #rva. How can we consider using hashtags more effectively?**

- Sometimes hashtags aren't unique and causes confusion.
- Good when official account uses #hashtags, can be double-edged sword because you're lending credibility to something you don't necessarily control. Also helps to push information though. Can mitigate by including all relevant hashtags, show you're aware but not endorsing.
- Good when official accounts reference all regional hashtags.
- Stay away from acronyms since they're often ambiguous.
- Suggest allowing the public influence the hash tag creation, therefore, it is unnecessary to create one for the agency.
- Pros/cons of Hashtags—Fairfax uses #ffxstorm as a way to handle multiple....and established ahead of time. Regional hashtags can be helpful for data mining AND for communicating with the public.
- Baltimore use “#Bal” at the front of their hashtags. Could use Airport abbreviations for hashtags I some place. Baltimore Police uses a hashtag to ID the district.
- When you retweet, may have to delete some hashtags.
- SocialMention.com — can enter an event or location and associated hashtags ... can help get information on emerging hashtags.
- Hashtags shouldn't get in the way of the message. Hashtags are important to add yourself to an ongoing conversation. Hashtags should be relevant, and not overly characterized. Helpful for filtering.
- It's difficult to nail down a specific hashtag for public use when many people call many things by many names.





- It's helpful to embrace what hashtag the public is using during disaster. Also helpful to build up a consistent hashtag for a recurring or planned event.
- Maybe look at regionalizing common themes throughout a metro area as well as predesignating local hashtags for situations or events and publicize.
- Regional and local hashtags will be better than broader hashtags, which will be filled with tweets from outside your region, it is best to make yours region-specific from a Twitter account with a large number of followers to best support a large percentage of local following using your hashtag.
- Pros: recognizable and teaches public to use common and structured methods for communication to talk about disasters. Cons: takes time to catch on; media or public sometimes makes them up before we get in on conversation, confusion from TWC naming storms in conflict with hash tags.
- Hashtags – More important to use the @ – relationship outside twitter makes the connection better. Don't have extra room for hashtag during emergency. Too many versions of the hashtag can exist. Use hashtag as part of the tweet, not separate. Pro to hashtags can help organize your tweet - on Facebook # has been tried but more useful for Twitter.
- Pros: Bringing everyone on the same page. Easy to market a hashtag. Consolidation of multiple agency's message. Cons: Does anyone know the hashtag exists? Residents, agencies? How is it marketed? Eats up characters, so keep it short. Some residents don't know about hashtags. Make sure you're using same hashtags across multiple platforms.
- Use specific tags to avoid getting lost in the discussion/Twitterosphere. Use tags relevant to your message - increases credibility. Know when to retire specific hashtags.
- Surprised by Boston not using hashtag during their info sharing.
- PGFD search example: every AM search, all results come up regardless of hashtags
- Some value when asking for information FROM your audience #tips.
- Short number of characters, fewer acronym, better for large volume.
- Great for twitter chats, events, conference – timely.
- What are the pros/cons of using regional/local hashtags on Twitter? How can we consider using hashtags more effectively? They enable us to monitor the incident related tweets, sharing of collected information, problem solving and corrective action. Unfortunately, they can also serve as sources of false reports and rumors. There is more information than human resources to manage, share and potentially with far reaching consequences.

**Question #3: In the context of social media response, what would you do (or expect) in the first five minutes, 30 minutes and 60 minutes of a major incident affecting the NCR such as Hurricane Sandy, an incident at the Marine Corps Marathon or, say, the sniper shootings (if they had happened in a social media era versus 2002)?**

- Major incident and one's role (operations or PIO) drives how social media will/if be used.
- Depends on the incident and the agency (law v. health availability of info, etc.) Important to communicate something quickly to instill confidence in constituents, even if it isn't much.
- Simple, concise statements on what's current. Subsequent messages can be updates expanding on prior, ground-laying posts.

#### **5 Minutes:**

- Identify what the event is from lead official account or OEM with advisory/next steps
- Unfiltered, user feedback/posts
- ID any immediate actions for public to take, it occurred and impacted area. Simple, basic facts.
- Monitor social media, find out accurate details about what happened.
- As quickly as possible, acknowledge that something has happened. (or "verify the event")
- First five minutes looking for confirmation that the incident happened.
- Confusion, instant reactions, photos, eyewitness accounts, questions, concerns.

- Some acknowledgement of the event and we are on it.
- What's happening, where will I get updates, who do I follow, who's the spokesperson
- Monitor with key search terms for any incident-related posts.
- Breaking News/Imminent Danger message to provide critical information and establish that jurisdiction is aware and responding.
- We attempt to confirm the initial reports. It is imperative to make public safety a priority. Locating your employer's emergency operations procedures manual or the home version might be useful at this time.

### 30 Minutes:

- Notifications, directives (i.e., shelter in place)
- Vetting of photos and messages from official account
- Description of suspects/call for information/data for the public
- Expect more details, other agencies involved, any traffic impacts, life safety issue. ID any other SM sources follow.
- Direction, instructions, action items for the public.
- List the sources of information, by 60 minutes a press release, declarations of emergencies, power outage/fatality counts.
- Reach out to contacts at responsible agencies. Call your contact to share information and get details. That's part of developing those relationships early on.
- More of same, re-tweets of information, media organization of event status, i.e., making sense of what happened.
- What do we expect people to do, readiness info.
- Some level of detail, do I need to take action, public safety considerations, share schools information. (go to the school to pick up?, stay away from school, etc)
- Status update – checking on, confirming this.
- Continued monitoring, correcting.
- Coordinate with surrounding entities, jurisdictions, etc.

### 60 Minutes:

- Better descriptions.
- More detailed directives from official account.
- Details of resources available.
- Directions for contacting agencies. (i.e., tip line numbers, email acct)
- YouTube.
- Continued updated info on situation, any further actions public can take, impacts on schools and business, etc.
- Get out emergency preparedness action instructions and messaging. Repeat these messages so people know what they should be doing.
- More of same, plus officials weighing in with status, directions on what people should do.
- Update information - contacts - how to get in touch with us.
- News conference information (what time), duration of impact (storm, road closure).

**Question #4: Describe a unique way your organization has used social media to monitor or engage before, during or after an incident. Or, have you noticed a unique way an organization used social media during a crisis?**

- Coming together in a JIC (DC) and communicating with one voice.
- MPD - to support investigations, attach YouTube videos to press releases/Tweets of offenses.
- GWU - used SM to broadcast event details to responders during an exercise
- Have not used it at the federal level.
- Example of social media use: Train crash in Baltimore, photo of overhead shot taken by news agency





- helicopter... they shared on social media — and the City of Baltimore use the photo to send to incident command (since area was so large). Was fast way to get information; leverage news media. Person who found it was at an emergency management (and not even onsite).
- During Sandyhook and Boston bombing, the support contractor for technology for first responders limited social media communication until later, after strategy developed.
- Uses If This, Then That website that allows you to create customized trigger and response actions.
- Resident who recognized photo of a suspect posted his cell phone number on state PD Facebook page. Also monitored SM channels during hostage incident and made command post aware of tweets with photos of police swat and snippers getting into position as well as bomb squad.
- Use of social media to alert public about the current status of businesses. Social media response and recovery should extend past the PIO and into the culture if the organization. Having a coordinated message between different agencies, volunteer groups, etc.
- Live streaming of a press conference during Hurricane Sandy using USTREAM and shared on social media platforms, to be viewed without editing without news editing.
- FDNY dispatching help based on tweets during Hurricane Sandy (responding to Twitter cries for help during an emergency). Baltimore EOC using Twitter to verify downed trees by sending photos.
- Posting road closings during Tropical Storm. Posted at regular intervals. Also received information from citizens about roads that were impassable or had debris and sinkholes in the roadways.
- Software used to monitor geolocation for tweets and social media posts. For example, gun rally. Anything referring to gun rally that came from an area, can see the post, picture, and information about the person posting it.
- FEMA - rumor control with large check marks and red x's to show what is rumor and what is correct.
- Also, the concept of each locality having a "sandy" page ... Locality web address/sandy to organize info during an event.
- Unique - FEMA has new app that disaster survivors can upload pictures of affected areas which populates a map so others can avoid the area to provide situational awareness. What we can do better - weather websites and localities could do better at making closing decisions more decisively, timely. Ray LaHood blog built around his personal life that took off because it was a personal aspect. Add a blog as a middle ground between traditional media and social media - consistent.
- PGPD used SM to engage citizens during the derecho - asking citizens to tell us about downed power lines and dark intersections so the PD could adjust resources to largest dark intersections.
- Fairfax Connector went real time to use Twitter/Facebook as a live crisis center to help citizens stranded during snow storm, asked passengers to check on fellow passengers and pass on messages to people without mobile access.
- Boston PD engaged all of us with their social media outreach.
- Crowd-sourced pictures of downed trees and yard damage during Derecho storm, then posted all to a Flickr slideshow (added to homepage and pushed back out over social media).
- HHS example – Asst. Dir of Prep & Response – interested in how people were feeling, took info and incorporated in response.
- Red Cross DigiDoc – Radiant6 search by mood.
- Topsy – another sentiment analysis (filter for sarcasm & false positive).
- Vine – "...heard it through the Health Vine" (HHS Vine account).
- Some have requested that posted submit photos with their initial reports in efforts to substantiate what's being represented in the initial report. Substantiated reports or communications improves the responsiveness of operations.



**Question #5: It is likely that a regional public information officer position will be funded through grant money (though there is no guarantee of funds beyond the first year). This position would be based in Fairfax County, but it would serve the region. In what ways could this regional PIO serve the interests of the entire NCR, especially with regard to social media and emergencies?**

- This is an unwise decision to not leverage FEMA regional offices and have their representative perform the duties of the position because there are no politics involved (they are unbiased).
- Coordinate regional messaging for large scale incidents. Help coordinate items mentioned in #1.
- The PIO could serve the interests of the entire NCR by heading up the PIO working group for the NCR, and train a corps of volunteers to help monitor social media which can be employed to local EOCs.
- A regional PIO would only truly be useful based on how well they are networked, known and trusted. May be most successful as a liaison between all types of organizations, rather than the primary communicator. Bring different resources together/centralize during large disasters. Get to know each pio's strengths, threats and resources.
- If it's a deployable resource, could relocate during activations and serve more of a liaison role.
- If able to associate with entire region, would be good way to develop relationships.
- Would be a great resource to have them accept questions to help find resources for citizens.
- Streamline/coordinate efforts between agencies/organizations to reduce duplication of efforts and promote information sharing.
- This person could be responsible for developing hashtags that would be the master hashtag used in the emergency.
- The person could be responsible for maintaining contacts and distributing information based on the areas affected.
- To promote the regional JIC site and make it more robust.
- There's a need for standards and protocols that would help jurisdictions use the same things (when to use hashtags, @ signs). Could be the person in control of regional messages to push out to local pios.
- This person should coordinate w/COG & other departments and let them know who they are and what they do.
- Coordinate regularly w/ individual area PIOs and social media owners. Share findings w/ everyone via a listserv and regularly scheduled meet-up.
- No - Political concerns, competing messaging. Might work better if this person coordinated training or technology, etc. amongst all jurisdictions. Good resource, leadership.
- Establishment of digital volunteers to manage the information. Team building with DC government to foster more productive partnerships. Creation of clearly defined vision and mission statements. Improving information sharing and swiftly dispelling rumors and false information.

**Question #6: What's one non-government example of excellent social media use we could learn lessons from for emergencies?**

- Clearance process for tweets.
- Humanity Road and Red Cross.
- Incorporating visual elements to engage the public, getting involved in trends like #ThrowbackThursdays and "Keep Calm and \_\_\_," and find a call to action to bring people together in the same manner as organizing flash mobs.
- Boston, BP, Taco Bell and General Electric for engaging the public with interesting and funny vines and tweets that also refer to their main products. Oreo (during the Super Bowl) quick action. Waffle House uses trending topics to make tweets relevant to them.



- Super Bowl OREO cookie spoof on Social Media during power outage.
- Adam Kokesh - posted video on YouTube at Freedom Plaza with guns, people reported it, he didn't have to "hold a press conference" to get your message out.
- Capital Weather Gang - mixes humor with information and establishes as reliable source.
- Tracking potential 2013 derecho.
- Black Forest Fire (Colorado Springs, CO).
- Pet reunifications with photos sent during evacuations by citizens/responders who found them.
- Inauguration committee: Special Twitter account for the inauguration.
- American Red Cross: digital volunteers.
- We may be biased, but the American Red Cross...(three are sitting at our table!)
- #OKhaves & #OKhavenots - after tornados connected those with needs with those who had things to share. After Sandy, AirBandB offered free postings for people offering homes or spaces for Sandy survivors. Facebook has the ability to have disaster messages posted at the top by area (IP address).
- Google people finder helped locate/connect people during emergencies. Red Cross has Safe & well site
- Political campaigns (ability to attract followers, mobilize people to act, get their message out).
- American Red Cross for their use of getting citizens help during Hurricane Sandy.
- Sports teams and leagues tweeting pics pre-game, during games, and after events. It builds excitement, expands upon and sustains it, then recaps it and leaves followers wanting more for next event.
- Google Crisis Maps.
- Country Music Assoc. – fully integrated app w/ social media, email, etc.
- Apple – create hype, delay, release (building followers).
- Comedians – levity, frequency.
- Integration of visual content – video, photos, graphics, etc.