

SOCIAL MEDIA & DISASTER COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

When disaster strikes, your employees and customers are listening and looking to you for real time answers. But when it comes to using social media to communicate important information, what does a good strategy look like and how do you make it effective?

Use this checklist to help your organization develop an effective social media and disaster communication strategy. Follow the simple steps below and you'll be on your way to a rock-solid plan.

✓	BEFORE AN EMERGENCY: Build your voice. Earn trust.
	Designate a Social Media Manager to manage your account. Make sure your social media manager knows how to communicate properly and can react professionally. Make sure they have the right judgment to make quick decisions. Your online voice should reflect your organization.
	Establish a voice TODAY. No matter the business, everyone can benefit from using social media. Keep your account active and engaging year-round by sharing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company updates, awards and other news • Industry news & blogs • Tips and resources related to your industry
	Plan ahead. Create a content repository to store anticipated FAQ's & ready-to-post resources and links including information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-emergency related info listed above • Local news websites • Important websites you will need to reference during an emergency. (FEMA, Red Cross, Local News stations, local government, local businesses etc)
	Build your network. Follow other local business & organizations. Do not follow everyone that follows you. Try to follow only those accounts that are directly valuable to your organization.
	Spread the word. Let employees and customers know you've gone social. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering hosting a Lunch & Learn to educate employees on your social media communication strategy. • Assist and encourage non-social users to set up accounts and learn the ropes. • Hold a contest to encourage employees to participate.
	Work with your communications/PR team to coordinate a policy. Share policy with employees.
	Use an online monitoring tool to help schedule posts, filter messages and keep communication efficient. (Many sites offer free services, ie. hootsuite)
	Create an "emergency employee-only" hashtag. i.e. #agilityemployees. Use this hashtag to relay important info to employees such as office closures, delays, alternate locations or other updates. Make sure employees are aware of this special hashtag BEFORE an emergency.
	Have back up. Designate one or more team members (depending on your organization's size) who are well versed in your plan and can assist in the event of a large scale emergency.
	Keep it up. Don't neglect your account for days or weeks on end. Share tips and resources mentioned above to keep followers engaged.
✓	DURING AN EMERGENCY: Respond effectively.
	Assess the situation. Understand the emergency at hand and gather all materials you will need including; content repository, web pages, a copy of your communication plan, etc.

	Speak up. Let your followers know you're aware of the situation as you assess your next steps. Post a message to your followers such as: "We're working to get you the best information. Stay tuned."
	Join the conversation. Use hashtags to connect your tweets with others talking about the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify trending hashtags in the event of weather or regional emergencies. • Use your emergency employee-hashtag to send out employee updates.
	Monitor keywords, including your organization's name and emergency-only employee hashtag. Use the search feature on twitter or set up alert notifications via your online monitoring tool.
	Provide accurate, clear and <i>trusted</i> information throughout the event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News and updates • Employee specific updates using your emergency-only employee hashtag • Impact of the emergency to your organization, i.e. closures, delays. • (Refer to your content repository for FAQ's & important links.)
	Listen to local news and radio for real time updates, if available. Share updates if relevant.
	Be timely. Respond to concerns and posts in a timely manner. During an emergency, your employees & customers will listen to anyone talking. Let followers know when you will provide more updates.
	Respond to problems. Be calm - Your followers are likely to be frantic, panicked, uncertain and frustrated. When responding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the issue. Let them know they are heard and you are there. • Address the issue: Provide helpful resources. • Apologize when necessary and show empathy. Offer to discuss offline if necessary. • Identify and address any rumors or false information related to your organization. • Be cautious of word choice and tone. Stay neutral and keep communications helpful and professional.
	Consider "geotagging" your keyword & hashtag searches for popular hashtags such as #flood, #fire to help identify flood and fire discussions for your specific area. (*See more about geotagging at the end of this checklist)
	Consider converting links to shortened & trackable URL codes using a free service like Bitly.com. This will help keep messages under 140 characters and will identify which information your followers find the most useful.
	Unless authorized, do not give official statements or handle media inquiries via social media. *Make sure employees are fully aware of this policy.
✓	AFTER AN EMERGENCY: Follow up and measure.
	Continue to communicate. Share relevant information including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on your organization's status after the event • Closures/Hours of service • Product availability • Alternate office locations
	Measure. Use data to understand what your audience found useful to help guide social media operations moving forward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you converted your links to shortened Bitly.com links, identify which resources your followers found most useful by analyzing click rate statistics on each link. • Identify what information received the most retweets and mentions.
	Follow up with any concerns you were unable to address during the experience. Apologize for any delay and follow up accordingly. It's better to respond late than never at all.

	Recap. Hold a debriefing session after the emergency with other team members to discuss lessons learned and how to improve your social media communication strategy.
	Include employees in the recap process. Send a survey, ask for suggestions.
	Repeat. Keep your social feeds active! Go back to posting regular updates, resources and tips.

Additional Resources:


Whether you're a social media pro or just starting out, the world of social communications is constantly evolving. That's why we've created the following list of free resources that will help you plan and prepare as you develop your organization's social media and disaster communication strategy.

How to:	Link
Set up a Twitter account:	https://twitter.com/signup .
Geotag your twitter searches:	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3coB42XVtM
Use Hashtags:	https://dev.twitter.com/media/hashtags
Create Buttons:	https://twitter.com/about/resources/buttons
Creating track-able bit.ly links:	https://bitly.com/
Stay in the know:	http://socialmediatoday.com/

A Word of Advice:


We hope you find this checklist useful. As you develop your social media communications strategy, remember to stick with it. Building an online voice takes time.

Just remember - when disaster strikes; your employees and customers are looking to you for answers. Be there by developing your organization's social media and disaster communication strategy today.



See it in Action!

Follow Agility on Twitter to see how we execute our social strategy.

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About Agility Recovery

Agility Recovery, a former division of General Electric, is a leading provider of disaster recovery solutions to organizations of all types. Agility provides robust and easy-to-implement recovery solutions for an affordable monthly membership fee, providing access to temporary power, office space, communications equipment and computer systems. For more than 25 years, Agility has rescued thousands of organizations with a 100% success rate. For more information, please visit:

www.agilityrecovery.com or call 877-364-9494.