

## **Communication Transformed: Social Media and Disaster Communication in the Modern Age**

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Crisis communication is immeasurably important to a community during a disaster. The ability to communicate both to responders and the public is critical for emergency management agencies. In recent years, the rapid growth of social media has spawned a new generation of open source, multilateral platforms that have changed the way people communicate.

Advancements in media technology now allow individuals to connect wirelessly to the internet, take videos and pictures, view and create maps, and share information nearly instantaneously. During disasters the ability to communicate is essential for maintaining situational awareness. Traditionally, the public was primarily a consumer of information, but these advancements have amplified the ability of the public to gather and relay information.

This report examines the benefits and limitations of social media integration into the broader crisis communication process, relying on case analyses and research. Results indicate that the field of emergency management is apprehensive to pursue the integration of social media dissuaded by the presence of pre-existing processes, as well as negative connotation accompanying social media.

Data collected shows potential advantages of social media integration, and challenges the negative stigma of the burgeoning technology. This report presents three policy options for the integration of social media into disaster communication. The policy outcomes are termed Proactive Integration, Reactive Integration, and Inactive Integration. Each option is evaluated against three criteria: Ease of Implementation, Economic Feasibility, and Benefits to Pre-existing Crisis Communication Processes.