FEMA — Department of Homeland Security

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Lessons Learned Information Sharing
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LLIS.gov Resource Compilation
for the 20 May 2013 Oklahoma Tornado

The LLIS.gov team has compiled various resources to help support efforts and initiatives focused on preparedness, response, and recovery following the May 20, 2013, Oklahoma Tornado. These resources are topic-specific and have been analyzed in order to provide support during the tornado response.

Use of Social Media for Public Information

Note: The *LLIS.gov* team conducted specific research on the use of social media for public information. *LLIS.gov* resources related to this topic are listed below.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION

This document includes information related to use of social media for public information before, during, and after a disaster.

The *LLIS.gov* team found that in recent years a variety of organizations have utilized social media extensively to provide disaster-related information to the public. In all these cases, social media played an essential role in providing critical information to responders and survivors despite widespread power outages throughout the disaster areas. Many of these efforts could be successfully replicated. In addition, the organizations mentioned in these documents could potentially provide resources, share lessons learned, and provide assistance to appropriate personnel in the disaster area. For instance:

Cleanup Operations following the Oklahoma Tornado (Source: FEMA)

- **Oct 2012**: Following Hurricane Sandy, a large number of people downloaded and accessed emergency preparedness smartphone applications. In addition, Twitter became an essential information sharing resource for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the public. For information related to specific efforts, please refer to the following *LLIS.gov* original content documents:

  – **Good Story: Hurricane Sandy: Millions Turn to Twitter for Hurricane Sandy Information Sharing**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Good-Story-Hurricane-Sandy-Millions-Turn-to-Twitter-for-Hurricane-Sandy-Information-Sharing
  This documents describes how government agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and the public used Twitter extensively before, during, and after

Hurricane Sandy made landfall. The use of Twitter ensured that victims could access and share accurate and up-to-date preparedness, response, and recovery information and make informed choices.

- **Good Story: Hurricane Sandy: Smartphone Applications Provide Critical Information to Sandy Responders and Survivors**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Good-Story-Hurricane-Sandy-Smartphone-Applications-Provide-Critical-Information-to-Sandy-Responders-and-Survivors
  In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, a large number of people extensively downloaded and accessed emergency preparedness smartphone applications (apps). The use of these apps helped responders and survivors access critical disaster-related information despite widespread power outages throughout the disaster areas.

- **Good Story: Hurricane Sandy: Displaced Sandy Survivors Find Free Temporary Housing on Social Media Rental Site**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Good-Story-Hurricane-Sandy-Displaced-Sandy-Survivors-Find-Free-Temporary-Housing-on-Social-Media-Rental-Site
  After Hurricane Sandy left over 100,000 of New York City residents temporarily homeless, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's office partnered with Airbnb, an online travel booking site, to match those needing temporary housing with others who had space to spare. This unique initiative provided New York residents wishing to help those affected by the disaster with an opportunity to contribute their already available spaces across the city.

- **Good Story: Hurricane Sandy: High School Students Innovate to Address Gas Shortages in the Wake of Sandy**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Good-Story-Hurricane-Sandy-High-School-Students-Innovate-to-Address-Gas-Shortages-in-the-Wake-of-Sandy
  Following Hurricane Sandy, a group of innovative New Jersey high school students partnered with the U. S. Department of Energy to provide information related to available fuel and generators to victims. The students employed open data sources and online maps to collect and share these critical, up-to-date information with survivors in the disaster areas.

- *LLIS.gov* **Hurricane Sandy Use of Social Media Research Compilation**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/LLISgov-Hurricane-Sandy-Use-of-Social-Media-Research-Compilation
  This document contains a compilation of resources related to the various uses of social media during and after disasters.

- **Sept 2011**: The Harris County, Texas, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) developed SOPs for managing social media information in 2010. In addition, the office developed a social media template for drafting, reviewing, and approving alert messages, Web site posts, and other information.

  HCOHSEM successfully used these SOPs and template during the 2011 Texas wildfires. This effort enabled HCOHSEM to disseminate information rapidly, to answer questions, and to dispel rumors posted on social media Web sites. *LLIS.gov* original content documents related to this topic include:

- **Emergency Public Information: The Harris County, Texas, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's Implementation of a Social Media Protocol**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Emergency-Public-Information-The-Harris-County-Texas-Office-of-Homeland-Security-and-Emergency-Managements-Implementation-of-a-Social-Media-Protocol

- **Aug 2011**: Cranford, New Jersey, Police Department personnel used Nixle to disseminate information to the public after Hurricane Irene. Nixle allowed personnel to reach residents through text messaging, email, and social media platforms simultaneously. *LLIS.gov* original content documents related to this topic include:

  - **Emergency Public Information: Cranford, New Jersey, Police Department's Use of Nixle After Hurricane Irene**
    https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Emergency-Public-Information-Cranford-New-Jersey-Police-Departments-Use-of-Nixle-After-Hurricane-Irene

- **May 2011**: After the Joplin tornado, the cities of Joplin and Duquesne, Missouri; the State of Missouri; and FEMA partnered to effectively communicate public information about the Expedite Debris removal to residents. These entities recognized that the magnitude of the disaster created public information needs that would quickly overwhelm existing capabilities. Further, debris removal, housing, and other areas required specific, technical expertise not available locally. The following *LLIS.gov* document describes specific mechanisms utilized to communicate Expedite Debris Removal information to residents.

  - **Disaster Recovery: The Public Information Partnership formed by the Cities of Joplin and Duquesne, the State of Missouri, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the May 22, 2011 Tornado**
    https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/disaster-recovery-public-information-partnership-formed-cities-joplin-and-duquesne-state

- **Apr 2011**: The Mecosta County, Michigan, Emergency Management Director used social media to share images and video of damage caused by the April 2011 flooding. County officials reviewed photographs and video as the Director uploaded them and completed preliminary damage assessment reports. The Director's decision to upload photographs and videos of flooding damage to Facebook and Twitter improved the county's damage assessment and disaster declaration processes. For specific information, please see the following *LLIS.gov* document:

  - **Emergency Public Information: Mecosta County, Michigan's Use of Social Media for Communicating with the News Media and Officials During Disasters**
    https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Emergency-Public-Information-Mecosta-County-Michigans-Use-of-Social-Media-for-Communicating-with-the-News-Media-and-Officials-During-Disasters

- **Feb 2010:** The Montgomery County, Maryland, Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) used Facebook, Twitter, and a blog to request that the community uncover fire hydrants buried in snow after consecutive February 2010 winter storms. MCFRS personnel used social media to share information with, and provide guidance to, the community. This effort resulted in the effective participation of the community in recovery operations after the snowstorms. Please see the following *LLIS.gov* document for additional information:

- **Emergency Public Information: Montgomery County, Maryland, Fire and Rescue's Use of Social Media to Engage the Community After Consecutive Snowstorms**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Emergency-Public-Information-Montgomery-County-Maryland-Fire-and-Rescues-Use-of-Social-Media-to-Engage-the-Community-After-Consecutive-Snowstorms

- **Sep 2009**: Following the 2009 American Samoa Tsunami, the FEMA Region IX Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) produced nearly two dozen of "webisodes" that were posted on YouTube, government Web sites, news Web sites, and other Internet sites. The webisodes educated audiences in the U.S. and around the world about the progress being made in American Samoa. This effort was instrumental in the success of the response. Please also see the following *LLIS.gov* document:

  - **Emergency Public Information: Using Social Media to Disseminate Updated Information During Incident Responses**
    https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Emergency-Public-Information-Using-Social-Media-to-Disseminate-Updated-Information-During-Incident-Responses

In addition, readers may find the following *LLIS.gov* original content document helpful:

- **Social Media in Emergency Management: The Virtual Operations Support Team Concept**
  https://www.llis.dhs.gov/content/Social-Media-in-Emergency-Management-The-Virtual-Operations-Support-Team-Concept
  A Los Ranchos de Albuquerque Emergency Management Office, New Mexico, emergency management coordinator established a group of "trusted agents," to assist with the office's social media presence. In a large-scale incident, this Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST) can manage aspects of social media operations for the office or for other jurisdictions and organizations that need support. VOST was activated in several occasions, including during the:

  - National Emergency Managers Association conference in March 2011
  - Hurricane Irene in August 2011
  - Shadow Lake Fire, Oregon, in August 2011
  - Pacific Northwest floods and severe weather in January 2012