



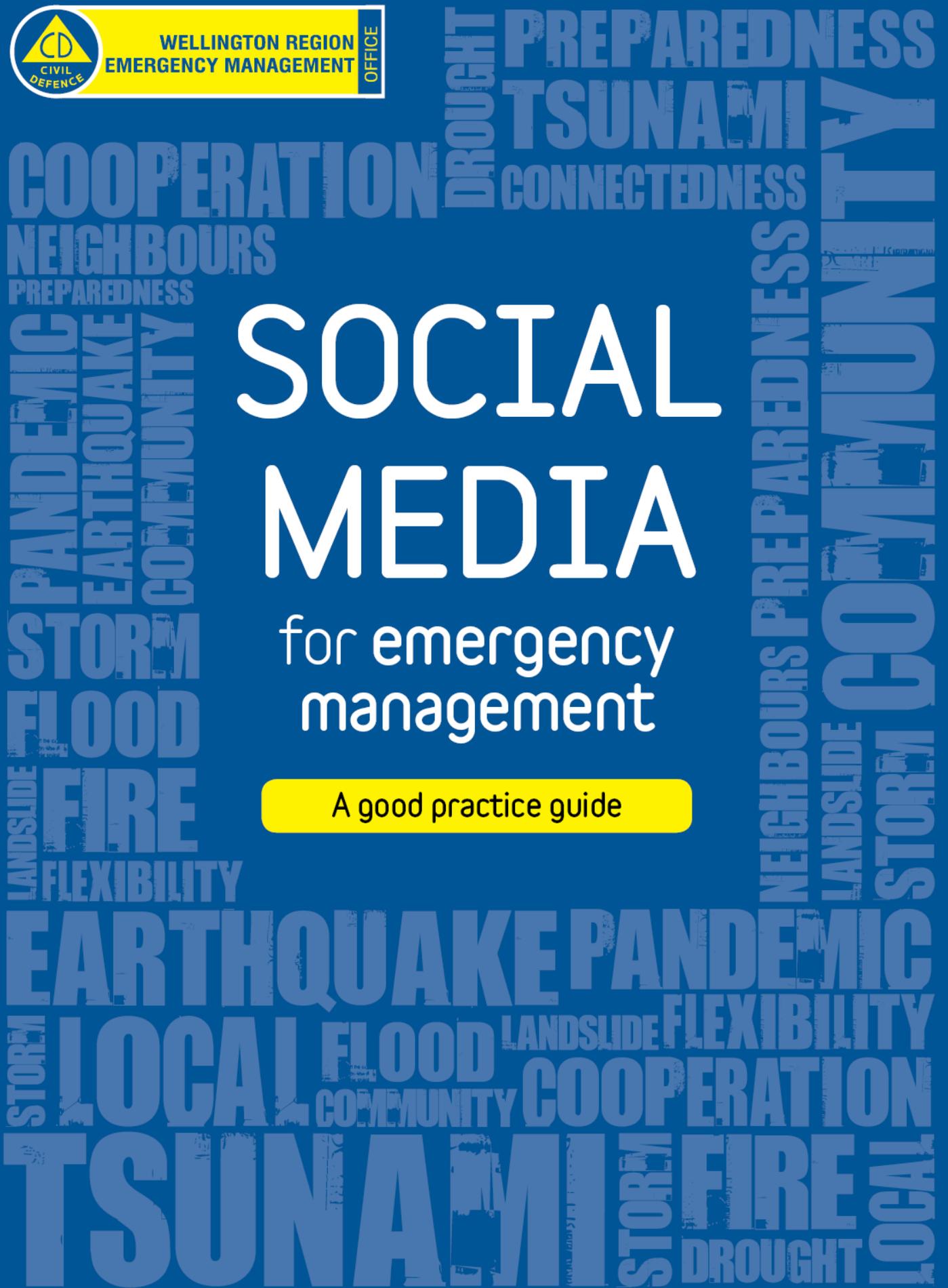
WELLINGTON REGION  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OFFICE

# SOCIAL MEDIA

for emergency  
management

A good practice guide



# Social Media for Emergency Management

## A good practice guide

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## Introduction

Social media is collection of online networks and virtual communities hosted by a variety of internet-based applications. Users are talking, informing sharing, collaborating, and connecting online. Unlike traditional broadcast media, interaction is the heart of social media – it's social!

In this internet age, social media has become part of everyday life for a large portion of the population, so tapping in to social media presents a vast audience for the messages that the emergency management sector wishes to get out into the community, as well as an opportunity for a larger portion of the community to be actively involved and engaged in emergency management.

Social media can be used to:

- build preparedness in the community through information and advice, pointing people towards useful resources, sharing preparedness tips,
- increase connectedness among the community and build stronger relationships with the community – conversations occur between the public and the organisation, and between people who may not have otherwise connected.
- build trust with your community
- monitor public opinion
- rapidly share information about potential or occurring emergencies with a large number of people
- request information on particular areas of interest, whether day-to-day feedback or during a response
- build situational awareness in events

It is not all-encompassing, however, as many people still do not have access to digital technologies, so should be used in conjunction with traditional media and communications, and not stand alone.

### Scope of the guide

This guide will help your emergency management organization effectively use social media to engage with the community, and allow information sharing before, during, and after an emergency. The purpose of this guide is to provide practical advice for using social media in emergency management in day-to-day business, as well as the response phase of an emergency.

For those who are entirely unfamiliar with social media, you may need to look at some additional resources. Fortunately, many of these can be found with the help of internet search engines, such as Google.

A review of literature on social media in an emergency can be found at [www.getprepared.org.nz/publications](http://www.getprepared.org.nz/publications).

## Getting started

This guide is most effective when put into practice before an emergency event. You will want to:

- develop relevant strategy and policy
- plan for staffing requirements whether for business-as-usual use or during the response
- source and train appropriate staff
- build your online presence and audience
- Build trust between your community and your organisation, so that people come to you seeking advice when an emergency arises

## Persuading management

We would hope that by now, more organisations are seeing the benefit of engaging with social media, and it would be easy to get your organisation involved. However, some still face difficulties in persuading management to allow them to view social media from their work computers, let alone create content on behalf of their organisation.

Time wasting? Social media is a pretty social place, so could be seen as a source of wasted time, and poor productivity. People do like to hang out online, so what better way to bring emergency management into the mainstream than through being part of what people do in their spare time? If you are worried about your staff doing less work because of access to social media, you already have policies in place for personal use of telephones, and company codes of conduct to deal with people shirking work. Yes, there is a drain on company resources due to the time required to properly engage in social media, but that should be planned and accounted for in the same way that you plan and account for public meetings, and advertising in newspapers and on the radio.

Security? Social media takes place on the internet. If your organisation has adequate IT security measures in place, you should only be as vulnerable to computer viruses and hacking as you would be though normal internet use.

Control? You trust your staff to engage with people every day as subject matter experts or communications experts. Doing so online is no different.

Many high level government agencies, such as NZ Police, and Fire Service and local government agencies now have a presence on a number of social media platforms. Wellington Region Emergency Management Office has a Facebook page (WREMOnz) with one of the highest followings of any government agency in NZ, with around 38,000 followers.

While it is obviously it is better for engagement in social media to be carefully planned and approved, several high profile agencies have reported on the success of asking for forgiveness rather than permission! The success of those pages hopefully paves the way for others who would otherwise be more cautious.

## Creating a strategy

It's important that your organisation develops some agreed goals for using social media, and these should fit with your overarching organisational goals, and be incorporated into your organisation's communications strategy.

### How are you going to use social media?

Your organisation will need to decide how actively it will engage with social media, and to what purpose. You may choose to have different levels of engagement depending on the situation or available resourcing, but it would pay to remember that once you choose to engage in social media, you need to be able to meet and manage the public's expectations. While that sounds a little daunting, the payoff for engaging in social media is well worth the effort.

You may have different levels of engagement on different social media platforms.

**Observer:** You may choose to monitor social media channels without actively creating content. This allows you to monitor public opinion, and gather information on events, including during a response. This has a relatively low need for resourcing day-to-day, but will increase in an emergency. However, you will not be represented in the conversations on that platform, and you cannot correct misinformation or poor quality information from less authoritative sources directly.

**Broadcaster:** You may choose to use a social media platform as another broadcast channel similar to traditional forms of media, or choose to only use the platform during emergency events for public information. Information can be generated and shared easily across formats (e.g. copy and paste from media releases), but social media users who are unaware that you aren't engaging in conversation on that platform will be disappointed when you do not respond. This can be helped by stating the broadcast nature of that platform for you, and directing users to the platforms where you are more actively engaged, if present.

**Dabbler:** You may have an account in order to post comments on platforms where you are not otherwise engaged in order to correct misinformation. Like the Broadcaster, you may have to direct people to the platforms where you are more actively engaged, otherwise users start to expect your presence in that platform.

**Fully immersed:** You may choose to involve yourself fully in the social media platform, making it another way to engage with your community day-to-day – generating content for discussion, responding to questions and comments, having conversations, and making it part of your business as usual practices for community engagement, as well as providing information during an emergency response. This level of engagement has the highest level of resourcing required, but also the greatest benefit.

### What types of social media are you going to engage with?

There are a wide variety of social media types that you could use, depending on what you want to use them for. Start by identifying what you want to accomplish, and then choose which type will be best to help you achieve this. You do not have to engage with them all!

**Social networking sites**, such as Facebook, Google+ and Twitter, allow users to find, link and share a wide variety of content with other people or groups.

**Media-sharing networks** such as YouTube, Flickr and Pinterest allow users to create, upload, and share videos or photos with others.

**Community discussion forums** allow users to discuss specific topics and issues with groups of other users. Users can create new threads of discussion on topics of interest to them. In New Zealand, the most popular community discussion forum is currently TradeMe.co.nz.

**Blogs** allow users with access to write articles on any subject, and are generally displayed in chronological order with the most recent updates first. Blogs allow visitors to comment. Examples include Blogger and WordPress.

**Wikis** allow users to contribute and share information about any topic. Wikis can be set up for specific topics, such as emergency management. Wikis are generally open for all, or a large number of users to contribute and edit (referred to as “crowdsourcing”). Examples include Wikipedia and WikiHow.

**Social news sites** such as Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz allow users to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on content.

**Mashup or mapping software** such as ArcGIS and Ushahidi allow users to combine large sets of data from multiple sources and map them to provide a visual oversight of the information available. This “crowd-sourced” data can be very useful for situational awareness.

### Which social media platforms are you going to use?

For each of these different types of social media, there are a number of different platforms.

Some of the platforms within the same social media type have different constraints – e.g. Twitter only allows 140 characters of text, so suits a different purpose than Facebook.

You may end up with some kind of presence of several platforms at varying levels of engagement, but it would pay to work with the platforms which are most popular.

In August 2013, the most popular social media platforms in New Zealand were:

1. YouTube
2. Facebook
3. WordPress
4. LinkedIn
5. Tumblr

The 2.4 million Facebook users in New Zealand equates to 64% of the population over the age of 13 having an account.

The popularity of social media platforms can vary wildly over time – not many people still use MySpace or Bebo! – so be prepared to shift with the tide, and keep an eye on emerging trends.

Ask your staff which platforms they use personally, and tap into the fact that they are already familiar with them, so need little training in their use.

## Policy

Your organisation will need to develop policies around the use of social media.

### Code of Conduct

Your organisation should already have a Code of Conduct which all staff are expected to abide by. This governs expected behaviours in communication with people, as well as privacy of data and other organisational issues. You do not need to create a Code of Conduct especially for social media, as the overarching code will apply.

### Communications & branding

Similarly, your organisation should also have policies in place around communications and publications with regards to branding and logos, media releases, publications, official languages, accessibility for those with other languages and people with disabilities. These should also apply to your social media communications.

Your brand as an emergency management organisation is useful to highlight, as there is a level of implicit trust given to such agencies that can be beneficial in being identified as a source of credible information. Keep an eye out for others online who may be misusing your brand.

### Access to social media platforms

If your organisation chooses to restrict access to social media platforms to a few key individuals, you should consider the potential impacts of your other employees not being able to view what will be an official organisational communication channel.

You will also need to consider how you will manage social media in a response, where you may need to increase your available social media team beyond its day-to-day levels. Can your Emergency Operations Centre computers access social media? It is a valuable source of information in a response.

### Posting access

You should have a policy in place around what access is given to the people who post content on your behalf. Who can create the content for you? Who can respond to questions and comments? Does this change in an emergency response? The people who may normally post for you day-to-day may have other roles in an emergency. Consider the possible role of volunteers.

Consider how your staff log in to these sites – is there a generic login and password, or are individuals granted access via their personal accounts. Some platforms may have restrictions on whether generic accounts can be created or not – eg Facebook requires the use of real names.

### Sign-off

You should have a policy around what your staff are authorised to post without requiring sign-off, and what does require additional permission from management. This is quite important during an emergency response, due to the sensitive nature of some material, but your staff should be able to post information which isn't sensitive or is otherwise easily discoverable and in the public interest without having to go through normal media release sign off procedures. Social media requires speed and transparency.

## Legal considerations

There are some legal considerations for your organisation as a result of engaging with social media. Most legal issues are easily avoided by using common sense and observing existing codes of conduct. But these legal issues have not yet been fully tested by the courts and are rapidly evolving. This doesn't count as legal advice, so please speak to your organisation's legal expert.

### *Copyright*

The usual copyright rules apply to social media, so copying text or images into a social media application from a copyrighted source is likely to constitute a breach. Credits to the original source should always be provided. Depending on the intended use, permission may need to be obtained. "Sharing" (rather than copying) content is a way to meet these legal requirements.

Your organisation should also consider putting your work out under a Creative Commons licence, which grants prior approval for your content to be reused for particular purposes – this encourages the sharing of information among organisations across the world. More information is available from: [www.creativecommons.org.nz](http://www.creativecommons.org.nz).

### *Privacy*

Privacy legislation in New Zealand generally prohibits the publication, or any other use, of personal information about individuals without their knowledge. Legal requirements around privacy are detailed in the Information Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act.

Release of any photographic material of disaster sites is potentially problematic on social media sites if there are any identifiable people in those images. Appropriate amendments (e.g. masking faces and vehicle number plates) should be made to those images before posting online.

### *Record retention*

There are legal requirements around the retention of records for your organisation, and this applies to social media as well – posts and comments (including when old posts are edited). This can be difficult to achieve, but is still required.

If you have removed a comment or post, take a screenshot and save it for your records. It is not necessary to keep a record of spam or repeat entries.

There are a range of technological solutions that you can use for archiving social media, whether through requesting transcripts from the host site, or other

All this information is likely to be subject to the requirements of the Public Records Act 2005 and will be subject to the Official Information Act 1982. Visit [www.algim.org.nz/socialmedia](http://www.algim.org.nz/socialmedia) for more information on social media in local government.

## Removal of unacceptable content, blocking people

Sometimes people will post unwanted content on your social media pages. Set some policy around content that is unacceptable and will be removed, and how that removal will be tracked for record retention purposes. Unwanted content could include commercial posts (whether spam or legitimate business), malicious links, inappropriate language, sexist, racist, defamatory comments, etc. Consider what would lead to a user being blocked from posting at all on your site.

## Implementation

This section covers the implementation of your strategy.

### Choice of platform

Which platform you choose to engage with is up to you. There are so many that you would be spread too thin trying to cover them all. Choose the few platforms with the largest audiences which fit the goals you want to achieve, and direct traffic from other platforms to the ones you use most. The existing free social media platforms are generally high quality and are well equipped to handle large volumes of traffic.

Ask your staff which platforms they use personally, and tap into the fact that they are already familiar with them, so need little training in their use.

If you choose to develop your own platform (such as a smartphone application), consider sharing this technology with other emergency management organisations.

### Who posts

Who will engage in social media on your organisation's behalf? You don't have to be a communications expert to be on social media, you just have to be social.

At the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO), the Community Resilience Team posts content day-to-day, they also respond to comments and queries as they would from any member of the public, whether online, or face to face.

However, during an emergency, your day-to-day emergency management staff may have another role, so could be unavailable for managing social media. Consider how you could increase your team of available trained personnel, including the use of volunteers, and personnel from other partner agencies.

### Resourcing

You can only do as much on social media as you are resourced to do. If your resources are limited, you will have to limit your presence and engagement level to what you can easily maintain. But if you have created a presence, it should be appropriately resourced. It is better to not have a presence at all, than to have a presence and then go quiet.

If you are using a social media platform as a broadcaster, you may be able to use social media management tools, such as Hootsuite, which allow you to post to different platforms simultaneously. This tactic does not work so well if you are fully immersed in a platform, as your audience will notice the automated nature of posts.

### Content

Your level of engagement may be part of what determines the kind of content that you post. Your level of resourcing may also be another factor.

NZ Fire Service doesn't post emergency updates on their Facebook page, they reserve it for public education messages, safety campaigns, and other engagement activities. They don't have the resources to post on the vast numbers of incidents that they attend each day, and that does not fit with their overall prevention-first strategy.

WREMO posts a range of content on its Facebook page in order to be more engaging. Many public education messages can be quite dry, so WREMO makes use of pop culture references such as the Zombie Apocalypse, or movies like Sharknado, ([www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/660422233987079](http://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/660422233987079)) and other entertaining concepts to get the messages across. WREMO often draws its inspiration from Charlie's Keyboard Cat ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=J---aiyznGQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J---aiyznGQ)) – yes, the concept of a cat playing a piano is ridiculous, but 35 million people have clicked that link to see the video. Make posts interesting, capture people's attention and engage.

The importance of building social capital and connections in communities also drives WREMO's content. Community events are often advertised, as being active in the community is as much of a preparedness activity as storing water. You may need to remind your audience of this fact periodically.

Other traditional media outlets will often begin to source information from your social media posts directly. A post about road closures on WREMO's Facebook page during a storm event (<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/754914107871224>) was used to provide quotes from a Wellington Region Emergency Management spokesman for a news article on Stuff.co.nz (<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/9577776/Roads-closed-following-wild-weather>) that same day.

Like, follow, and share the posts of your partner agencies to help create a good network.

It can be useful to point your audience towards primary sources of information, so they are not relying on you to aggregate it – e.g. linking to the airport's website when people ask if the airport will be closed due to high winds in a storm, or to a power supplier's outage page.

Have a look at the example posts at the end of this guide.

### **Voice & building trust**

Decide on a shared "voice" and tone for your communications via social media.

The voice you choose to use can be quite important in building trust with your audience. Make sure that you use plain English and avoid technical jargon if possible, otherwise explain technical jargon in simple terms.

Be human! People are more trusting when they know that there is a real person behind the message. People are more trusting of individuals than they are of corporations.

WREMO staff sign off all of their posts, including during an emergency, with their first name. The fact that people see there is only a small team of people at work on social media builds a closer rapport, and helps create a more realistic expectation that "Civil Defence" is not a huge army and cannot solve every problem immediately.

Your authors may have their own individual writing styles, and sign off with their own name, but they should not be presenting their own personal opinion, but rather that of the organisation. It is important to remember the distinction.

However conversational you may be during day-to-day-communications on social media, during an emergency you will want to be calm and matter of fact. That being said, it still pays to maintain the human nature of posts by named individuals. The audience gains a feeling of having a friend on the inside, and this builds greater trust in your messages.

## Training

Encourage your staff to engage in social media in their personal time – this makes sure that they are familiar with the platforms, and make small mistakes in their own, rather than on behalf of the organisation. Social media platforms are often upgraded and altered over time, so frequent use will help maintain familiarity with the tools.

Choosing staff who are already familiar with social media will also cut down on your training requirements.

Consider including a social media component in your staff induction and any emergency management training provided.

## Access

Make sure that your staff have the ability to access and post to social media from their work environment – unrestricted internet, smartphone applications etc.

If there are generic logins and passwords, make sure that your staff know where to find that information in a secure location – eg a shared Google document online.

## How often to post

It is important to regularly engage with your following, but not so often that you become so ubiquitous that people scroll past your posts and no longer engage.

WREMO posts to its Facebook page at least three times a week with non-emergency update content. People are always interested in emergency updates during events, so you can post as many of those as your need to during a response.

## Responding

Social media is a conversational space, so if you have chosen to be fully immersed in a platform, you will need to be respond to comments and queries posted on your updates. It is useful for the author of the post to consider it to be theirs, and babysit it through its functional lifespan. Most platforms notify you of replies and engagement, so it is easy to track.

You may find that you are often asked the same questions, so it can be very useful to build a library of stock responses which can be tailored to suit the situation. This can be especially useful during an event. Store these in a useful location such as a shared Google document that your social media team can access.

## What if we get something wrong?

You will occasionally make typing errors, post photographs sideways, or even occasionally make factual errors when creating posts. When you do become aware of an error, it is important to be transparent about it and not try to hide it. Oddly enough, making mistakes publically, and then being seen to be honest about it and fixing them helps to build more trust with your audience. Again they see you as a group of real people trying your best to help them, rather than a faceless army who should be able to do everything. Apologise for the error, explain why it happened if you can, and then publish the correct information or otherwise fix the error.

### Maximising reach – use statistics to your advantage

The key to maximising the reach of your messages in social media is encouraging viral spread. When 100 people share a post with their 200 friends, and then 50 of those people share it again with their 200 friends, your post can reach an exponentially larger audience. You will find that the reach of your posts can far exceed the number of people who follow your social media page directly, especially during emergency events. Encourage your audience to share your posts via whatever format works

WREMO emergency update posts can reach over 130,000 people, even though the direct following for the page is only 38,000.

As an emergency management organisation, you will find that your audience can increase rapidly during a response. Make sure you stay engaging after the event to keep them!

WREMO's Facebook following went from 4,000 likes prior to the Matariki Storm of 2013, to 11,000 the day after, then to 27,000 following the Seddon quake in July 2013.

Most of the social media platforms have ways for page administrators to monitor the reach of posts. Facebook's Page Insights is a good example, as you can monitor which posts are successful, and how far they go, and you can see whether simple status updates, or photos, or videos, or shared links to other websites are the most successful way to engage.

### Preparation for response

Even if you are not fully immersed in a social media platform, there are a number of additional things you will want to prepare so that you can use social media effectively for an emergency response.

#### Trained staff

As your day-to-day staff may have other roles during an emergency response, you will need to make sure that you have sufficient staff resources to monitor and engage on social media. Your organisation's communications staff, public information staff, staff from partner agencies, and even trained volunteers can be used. The matter-of-fact nature of the communications in an emergency and the wealth of subject matter experts around in an EOC means that your social media team for the response do not need to be experts in emergency management, proficiency in social media is key.

Consider shift changes and staffing levels across a 24 hour roster.

Also consider the use of externally based teams, such as Virtual Operations Support Teams (VOST) to assist with monitoring social media for useful information for the response.

#### Equipment and access

Ensure that you have computers and full internet access for your social media response team in the EOC. Your team may be able to bring in their own equipment – laptops, tablets, smartphones etc, so make that a viable option.

### Templates

To save time in a situation where timeliness is critical, create templates for regular updates, such as situation reports, or pre-formatted alert and warning messages.

If you have had prior events, keep the list of frequently asked questions and the stock responses in an easily accessible location such as shared Google document for later reference. You may be able to recycle them for the latest event.

### Exercising

It can be difficult to exercise posting to social media for an exercise, so you should take advantage of smaller incidents – e.g. the more minor severe weather events – to train up other people for your team. Events such as large sports games can be a good tool for learning to monitor social media channels for a time and specific location. Taking part in larger international incidents, via VOST, can also be good training, and helpful for those you are assisting.

## During an emergency

This section covers advice for the use of social media in the response phase. It should be read in conjunction with the information and advice given for Before an Emergency. The best strategy for effectively using social media in a response is to be using it day-to-day.

### Managing resources available to you

Your organisation needs to remain adaptive with regards to allocation of resources for social media during a response. Some phases of response, e.g. during the warning phase or the initial response, will require more input in social media due to the public's need for good information:

- Information needs to be gathered and shared quickly
- Queries and pleas for help need to be responded to as soon as possible.
- Misinformation and myths need to be managed and corrected

Use social media management tools. These will simultaneously update multiple pages and sites, reducing the information dissemination and management workload. Examples include HootSuite and Tweetdeck.

Move past the “we don't have the resources” frame of mind to a more adaptive approach where you can bring in expertise as necessary.

Consider making use of volunteers and/or crowdsourcing. Volunteers can be useful for monitoring sites and gathering information during peak times in the response phase. There may be some supervision requirements for these personnel, so this needs to be considered when making decisions around the use of volunteers.

Consider outsourcing. Outsourcing to groups such as VOST has the particular benefit of being able to take advantage of time zone differences, giving your New Zealand based staff a much-needed break over the night shift.

Create cross-over between social media and more traditional media channels where news agencies gather information directly from your social media channels. You may find that reporters stop bothering your Public Information Manager so much, as they are already sourcing the information they wanted directly from social media.

### Working effectively with other agencies

Consider partnering up with other local and related organisations. If you do not have your own presence on a social media platform, consider providing your information to your partner agencies to be shared on their pages on your behalf. If possible, build a single unified picture of the response by sharing each other's information, or posting from a single source.

Link to other official sources of information where possible, so your audience are not solely relying on your posts to aggregate it – eg linking to the airport's website when people ask if the airport will be closed due to high winds in a storm, or to a power supplier's outage page.

## Building trust during the response

Ideally you will have built trust with your community before the event, but the response phase is a critical time where trust can be grown or, unfortunately, lost.

The community already has a level of trust in emergency management organisation through the nature of your work in helping people.

Show that you are a credible, authoritative and honest source of information for the event.

Acknowledge that something has happened, and start releasing information as soon as possible. Give people advice on what actions they should take, and link to existing sources of useful official information.

If you have created a social media page before an event or during a previous event, you will need to participate during this event too. Don't go quiet.

Keep releasing smaller updates in between larger updates and re-release key information at regular intervals, as older updates may get lost from the public's awareness.

If you make a factual error when creating a posts, apologise for the error, explain why it happened if you can, and then publish the correct information or otherwise fix the error.

## Managing community expectations

You cannot be everywhere on social media during a response, so if you cannot resource one of your usual channels, say so, and direct people to where they can find you and interact.

Social media users are used to rapidly shared information, and if information is not available from official sources, they will get it from anywhere they can, whether it has been confirmed as true or not. This is why it is important to let the public that you are aware of the event and that you are trying to find information to give them as quickly as possible – they may wait for your information as you are the credible source.

## Streamlining the release of information

Have templates for the release of emergency updates to speed up the process and provide consistency.

Work out what does or does not need to be approved by the Controller.

- Where information is sensitive (e.g. risk to lives, property, reputation, environment, city leaders or EOC staff) it is important to go back to the Controller,
- Hard information and facts may not need approval from the Controller,
- Anything sent out from MCDEM or other agencies does not require sign off and can be used,
- The PIM role has the authority to approve and sign off and then delegate – it is important the PIM liaises with the EOC,
- Consider live tweeting from press conferences – the Controller has already agreed to content and statements used during these,
- Include a “key public messages from this meeting are...” agenda item at all IMT meetings,
- Create templates ahead of time, and get them pre-approved.

## What to post

Some overarching principles to keep in mind include:

- Be transparent and adaptive,
- Trust an informed public to respond intelligently,
- Consider what information people need in order to make informed decisions and steer the information released towards this,
- Accept that you will get things wrong – the speed of information delivery is more critical in the climate social media has created,
- Credibility will be lost over time if you do not respond – don't go quiet,
- Remember that your use of social media is about creating relationships. Social media is, in its very essence, social and people are expecting a real person to be communicating with them, not a bureaucratic statement being turned out,
- It is important to understand that trying to respond to all comments and queries during the response phase is not possible and unnecessary – the community will assist in providing information where possible.

## Correcting misinformation

Emergency information shared online will generally be accurate - where there are inaccuracies, social media is a powerful tool your organisation can employ to address rumours.

Remember that your community generally wants to help – give them good accurate information to share where there have been rumours. If you make them feel valued, they can help do your work for you in correcting misinformation. Cite official sources. Encourage the public to share and retweet your posts.

If possible, contact the source of the misinformation and get them to retract and correct the information.

## Sourcing information

Because social media has the ability to be a two-way conversation, it gives emergency management organisations a very useful tool for gathering information from the community, including specifically targeted and requested information.

This information can be very important for the Planning and Intelligence functions in the EOC as well as the Public Information Management team. It is important that the social media team is well integrated with these functions.

## Managing the flow of incoming information

The amount of relevant information shared over social media may be vast. You will have to make some decisions regarding which channels you actively monitor. It will be extremely helpful to develop a collection plan to organise what information can be gathered and from where, and who will be responsible for collecting the information.

Traditional methods of collating, aggregating and releasing information are also useful for social media information.

Make use of analytic tools. Examples of analytic tools you could use include: Twistory, Hashtracking, HootSuite Archives and Storify. These provide a technological solution to aggregating information as they will automatically gather updates, posts and tweets and categorise these into a database, with a summary report being created.

Some natural groupings of topics may become apparent from the consistent use of popular hashtags by the public on Twitter. These provide a convenient filter for tracking down information relevant to your event – eg #eqnz, #stormwgtm.

### **Verifying, and integrating information from social media**

Use social media to request specific, required information where appropriate to validate information (e.g. request photographic evidence). An example post you could make is “We have received information about x,y,z, can anyone confirm this?”

Look for trending topics in social media – the volume of information can provide confirmation and validation for information.

Check other social media sites or accounts that you trust for verification, particularly other agencies’ sites.

It is important to note that traditional media will often source information from social media and may have a lower standard for validation and verification than emergency management organisations.

Where information sourced from the public has helped to create a positive outcome, remember to thank them for their contributions to the response.

## After an emergency

This section covers the actions you should take after the emergency is over to get the best out of your experience.

### After action report

As with every part of the emergency response, once the event is over an after action report should be created to help identify what went well, what didn't, and where there are opportunities for improvement.

Debrief all relevant personnel regarding key lessons to learn, and ask for any additional insights.

Evaluate the success of your initiatives:

- how far your messages reached (e.g. number of likes, shares, retweets, comments)
- positive and negative feedback
- increase in followers
- how coordinated was your social media with your other media activity? Integrated with website, radio, television.
- Survey your audience, and your partner agencies and invite further feedback

### Before the next emergency

Keep good records of your frequently asked questions and stock answers so they can be used for a future event. Store them somewhere accessible such as a shared Google document.

Make any appropriate changes to policies, and improve templates, and share these widely.

Share your experiences with other emergency management agencies to help them learn from your successes, or mistakes.

### Building on your audience

If your social media activities during an emergency have been successful, you will have gained more followers during the event. You will want to build a closer relationship with these new people, and if you are fully immersed, you may need to explain that you don't just post emergency updates.

### Capitalise on the event

Make use of the event to promote your preparedness messages. Encourage your audience to share their experiences and use it as a topic to generate more discussion and engagement.

## Glossary

**Analytic tools:** Analytic tools are used to assist with the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data (e.g. information shared over social media) for the purposes of optimising web usage. They can help manage incoming community-sourced information during the response phase.

**App:** an application that performs a specific function on a computer or hand-held device.

**Bitly:** This is a URL shortening service. It's especially popular on Twitter because attached URLs use up less characters in a tweet.

**Blogger:** a free weblog publishing tool from Google for sharing text, photos and video.

**Collection Plan:** a systematic process for collecting and organising information. Such plans provide an ordered way to collect and record information. An example Collection Plan is provided in Table 3.

**Crowdsourcing:** refers to the process of harnessing the skills of online communities or organisations that are prepared to volunteer their time contributing content or skills and solving problems.

**Facebook:** the most popular social networking tool in the Western world. Allows users to create profiles and connect with other people, communities and organisations.

**Flickr:** an online photo management and sharing tool.

**Google+:** a social networking site.

**Google Alerts:** email updates of the latest relevant Google results, based on nominated topics or key words.

**Hashtag:** a tool for grouping together tweets into various topics. Examples include #chch or #eqnz. Hashtags make it a lot easier for people to follow relevant information on a particular topic.

**HootSuite:** a social media management system that allows you to connect to multiple social networks from one website.

**Hootsuite Archives:** an archiving service (e.g. for record retention) provided within HootSuite.

**Mashup:** this term refers to the process of aggregating or combining up information from multiple social media sites and sources into one place. Tools such as Ushahidi summarise shared information in this way. Tools such as this make the task of monitoring incoming information much easier.

**MySpace:** an online social network allowing more flexibility in profiles than other sites (e.g. allows users to create an original look for their profile page).

**New Zealand Herald:** the upper North Island's most popular social news site (allows users to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on the content).

**Open source:** software for which the source code is freely available and modifiable.

**Pinterest:** an online "pinboard" that allows the user to organise and share sites, photos and videos on the internet.

**Post:** a statement or comment made on a social media site.

**Reach:** number of people who engage with, share or see your posts.

**Retweet (RT):** this refers to the process of resending a tweet, in its original form, to the re-sender's followers. Encouraging retweeting is an excellent way to widely spread information throughout the community.

**RSS feed:** Really Simple Syndication – allows you to subscribe to content on blogs and other social media and have it delivered through a web feed.

**Stuff:** the most popular social news site in New Zealand (allows users to read about news topics and sometimes comment or vote on the content).

**Subscribable:** any site that allows users to subscribe to the content (e.g. through an RSS feed). Once a user subscribes they will generally receive notifications of new content.

**Tags:** keywords added to a blog post, photo or video to help users find related topics or media. These are similar to 'hashtags' used on Twitter.

**TradeMe:** New Zealand's most popular auction, classifieds and community discussion forum site.

**Tweet:** a text-based post sent over Twitter. Tweets have a 140 character limit.

**Tweetdeck:** a social media management system that allows you to connect to multiple social networks from one website

**Twitter:** an online social networking and microblogging service. Allows users to send and read text-based posts ('tweets') of up to 140 characters.

**YouTube:** the most popular video-sharing website, allowing users to upload, view and share videos.

**WikiHow:** a web-based and wiki-based community, consisting of an extensive database of how-to guides.

**Wikipedia:** a free online encyclopaedia that anyone can edit.

**WordPress:** a free and open source blogging tool.

More detailed social media glossaries are available at:

<http://socialmedia.wikispaces.com/A-Z+of+social+media>

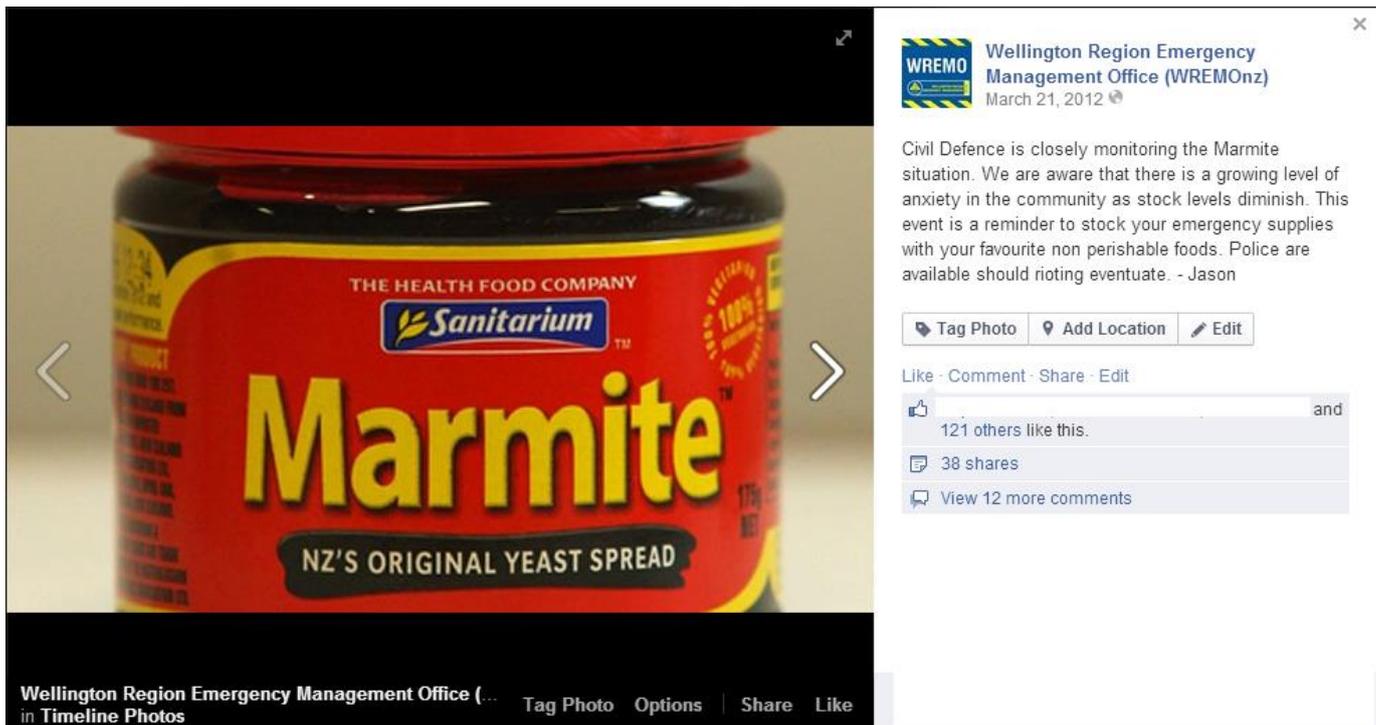
<http://www.socialbrite.org/sharing-center/glossary>

[http://thesocialmediaguide.com/social\\_media/social-media-glossary](http://thesocialmediaguide.com/social_media/social-media-glossary)

## Example posts

Here are some examples of the types of posts that WREMO uses to engage with its audience.

Make use of current events to illustrate a preparedness message.



**Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO)**  
March 21, 2012

Civil Defence is closely monitoring the Marmite situation. We are aware that there is a growing level of anxiety in the community as stock levels diminish. This event is a reminder to stock your emergency supplies with your favourite non perishable foods. Police are available should rioting eventuate. - Jason

Tag Photo Add Location Edit

Like · Comment · Share · Edit

121 others like this.

38 shares

View 12 more comments

Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMO) in Timeline Photos Tag Photo Options Share Like

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/photos/pb.118757108153597.-2207520000.1401413703./395368613825777/>

One of WREMO's most popular posts outside of an emergency event. The best weather warning ever!



**WREMO** Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMOnz)  
Posted by Jason Paul [?] · March 8

WEATHER WARNING - WELLINGTON - Perfect sunny evening with light to no breeze, followed tomorrow with fine spells. People are advised to seek outdoor entertainment, visiting markets and community fairs, and having BBQs and long walks around our fantastic waterfront. There is a chance that these conditions could remain with us all week. After the summer we've had it's great to see the sun out consistently for a while, we'd better make the most of the opportunity before we are back into what Wellington's best known for as winter arrives! - Jason

Like · Comment · Share    3,337    132    835

105,216 people saw this post    Boost Post

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/791803054182329>

Verus a normal weather warning - weather warnings often reach a greater audience than the number of people who officially like the page.



**WREMO** Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMOnz)  
September 3, 2013 · Wellington

SEVERE WEATHER WARNING - WELLINGTON. Strong cold southerly winds are expected to rise to severe gale about Wellington and the Cook Strait Wednesday afternoon, with gusts to 120km/h in exposed places. This may also affect KAPITI COAST and SOUTH WAIRARAPA from Wednesday evening. Winds are expected to ease Thursday morning. Winds of this strength can be damaging and make driving hazardous for high sided vehicles and motorcycles. The bitterly cold winds are likely to cause stress to vulnerable livestock and make outdoor pursuits hazardous, so rug up those spring lambs if you can, and take care out there! - Kerry

Like · Comment · Share

58,720 people reached    Boost Post

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/813968275299140>

WREMO's most popular post that doesn't actually relate to emergencies beyond the fact that connecting communities is actually a preparedness activity.



**Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMOnz)**

February 7 · 🌐

▼

CICLOVÍA is a phenomenon that is taking the world by storm. It's a simple concept - close a road to cars and open it to people. Free of traffic, Ciclovía allows people to experience their city in a whole new way. On Sunday 16 February from 1pm – 5pm, 3.5 kilometres of the Miramar Peninsula, from Shelly Bay to Scorching Bay, will be open for walkers, cyclists, and people on rollerblades, push scooters and in wheelchairs. It will be an opportunity to enjoy this lovely part of the Great Harbour Way without having to worry about traffic. COME AND ROAM FREE ON THIS BEAUTIFUL PART OF COASTLINE. - Jason

Like · Comment · Share

---

33,696 people reached

Boost Post ▼

👍 520 people like this.

Top Comments ▼

---

🔄 184 shares

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/773866602642641>

Don't take yourself too seriously!



**Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMOnz)**

July 25, 2013 · Wellington · 🌐

▼

A single SHARKNADO can devastate an entire community. In the event of a possible sharknado, we recommend having an evacuation plan, having readily accessible emergency supplies (chainsaws, crossbows and cue sticks) and, having a bigger chopper. Also, a business continuity plan is critical to ensure your workplace is minimally affected by a sharknado. You don't want to survive a sharknado only to have your livelihood destroyed because an errant hammerhead shark landed on the only copy of your accounting records.

\* This preparedness message was brought to you by your friends at the Wellington Region Emergency Management Office. - Dan



**SHARKNADO Trailer HD**

SHARKNADO Trailer HD Subscribe to TRAILERS  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/theDVASquad>

YOUTUBE.COM

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/660422233987079>

Update during an emergency.



**Wellington Region Emergency Management Office  
(WREMOnz)**

July 23, 2013 · Wellington · 🌐

▼

REGIONAL UPDATE - 10.00am Tuesday 23 July

This is our last post in this long format.

From now on, we will be drip-feeding information as we receive it.

**ROADS**

Expect delays.

Featherston Street is down to one lane with a 30km/hr speed limit. There may be delays in this area so avoid if possible. There will also be no parking on Featherston Street today. Pedestrian access has been arranged but pedestrians will have to cross the road in places.

Bolton Street between the Terrace and SH1 overbridge is down to one lane.

All major structures (bridges etc) have been assessed by engineers and deemed sound.

**PARKING**

Parking will be tight today as three parking buildings in town are closed, meaning 1500 fewer parks in town. James Smith, Reading Cinema and Victoria Street Parking Center (on corner of Willeston and Victoria Street) are closed.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Trains and buses running as normal this morning.

**BUILDING ISSUES**

Take care as you return to work today. Report any damage to your manager/employer.

There is likely to be some debris, so please take care when cleaning up.

Building owners should contact an engineer if there is any potential structural damage.

If this poses a risk to public safety, let WCC know - 499 4444.

Infrastructure has held up well, as have most buildings. No major structural issues with buildings have been reported around the city.

**UTILITIES**

All utilities are working normally.

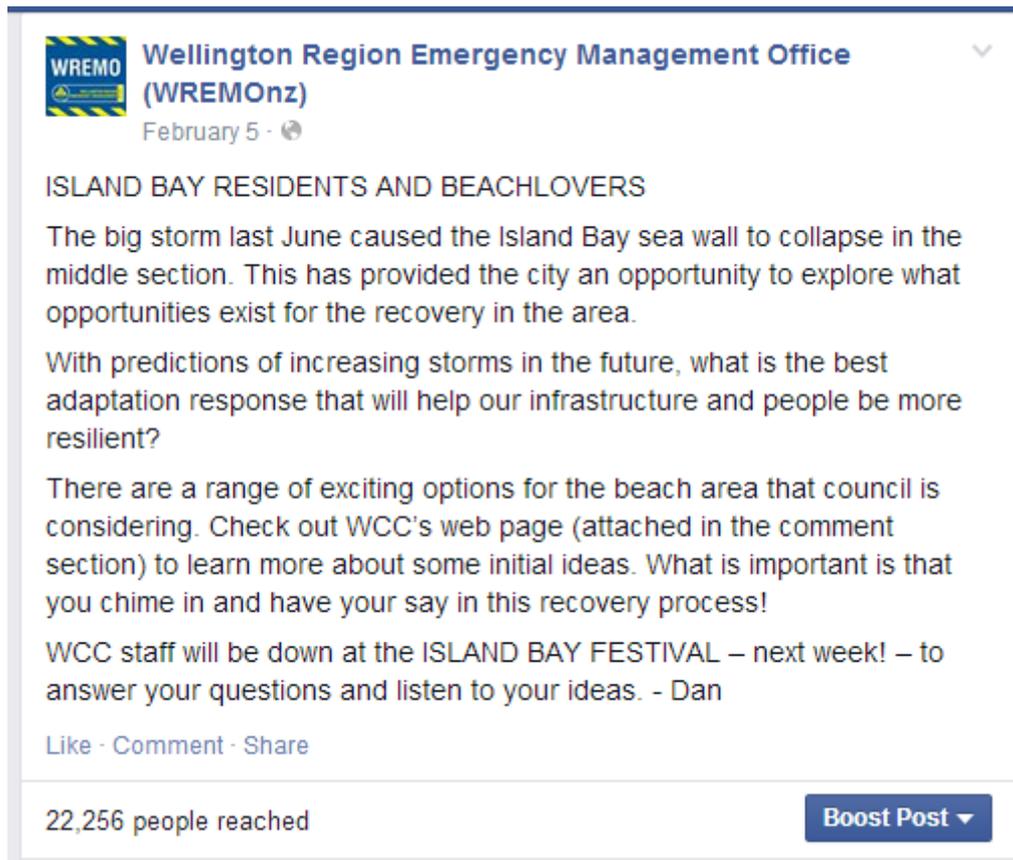
If people notice leaks or issues with water where it shouldn't be, they should contact their local council to report them.

**SUPPORT**

As aftershocks continue, Skylight 's web based support is launched for those who are feeling very anxious, (including children and teens) or who want to support others who are.

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/658859157476720>

Follow up on recovery activities after events to increase engagement with your new audience.



**WREMO** Wellington Region Emergency Management Office  
(WREMOnz)  
February 5 · 🌐

**ISLAND BAY RESIDENTS AND BEACHLOVERS**

The big storm last June caused the Island Bay sea wall to collapse in the middle section. This has provided the city an opportunity to explore what opportunities exist for the recovery in the area.

With predictions of increasing storms in the future, what is the best adaptation response that will help our infrastructure and people be more resilient?

There are a range of exciting options for the beach area that council is considering. Check out WCC's web page (attached in the comment section) to learn more about some initial ideas. What is important is that you chime in and have your say in this recovery process!

WCC staff will be down at the ISLAND BAY FESTIVAL – next week! – to answer your questions and listen to your ideas. - Dan

Like · Comment · Share

22,256 people reached **Boost Post** ▼

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/772811299414838>

You may also need to remind your new audience who have joined during emergency incidents that you don't just post emergency updates.



**Wellington Region Emergency Management Office (WREMOnz)**

Posted by Kerry McSaveney [?] · 24 mins · 🌐

**BUT THAT'S NOT AN EMERGENCY...**

You may have joined us on Facebook during or because of emergency events for updates on what was happening, and now wonder why we keep posting about community groups and community events and fairs, and ask what that has to do with emergency management.

Basically, connected communities do better in emergencies, so we do what we can to help build connections between people. Sports teams become clean-up crews, a Facebook page for organising a school fair becomes a school community hub for information and sharing resources in a storm, a doggy play-date group becomes an emergency dog care team when an owner can't get home, the list goes on - all community groups which had nothing to do with emergencies until an emergency happened, and then showed us the incredible value of being more than just an individual.

The best time to make those connections is now, when there is no emergency. Community fairs and other events are a great way to see the groups which are active in your local area - you may see a group that you are interested in joining! You may also see our fantastic volunteers at those events - they want to help their communities become more resilient and better prepared.

We will continue to post warnings and emergency updates when we need to, but most of the time there is no emergency (and that's just the way we like it!), so most of our time is actually spent on helping you build your capacity to get through, finding ways to connect people and communities, and getting everyone to work together to make the Wellington Region more resilient.

- Kerry

<https://www.facebook.com/WREMOnz/posts/861475170548450>

