FINAL
DRAFT

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

ISO/FDIS 22329

Security and resilience — Emergency management — Guidelines for the use of social media in emergencies

Reference number
ISO/FDIS 22329:2021(E)

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 292, *Security and resilience*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Having effective communication among organizations and with the public are important aspects of emergency management. The emergence of social media, in addition to other media such as television, radio, and newspapers, has provided more communication options and enhanced communication capability, but it has also made communication more challenging.

It is important that organizations recognize their potential benefits and threads inherent when using social media in their communication strategy, including crisis communication. Social media can improve situational awareness and communication capability and help citizens support each other during an emergency or crisis. Social media can also spread inaccurate information regarding an incident and the response to an incident. Organizations that have the capability to monitor and use social media can take advantage of the potential benefits and counteract the potential negative consequences that can arise from social media.

This document provides guidance on how social media can be integrated into communication in emergency management.

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Security and resilience — Emergency management — Guidelines for the use of social media in emergencies

1 Scope

This document gives guidance on the use of social media in emergency management. It gives guidance on how organizations and the public can use, and interact through, social media before, during and after an incident as well as how social media can support the work of emergency services.

This document is applicable to governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in emergency management and crisis communication.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 22300, *Security and resilience — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 22300 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
social media
online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other, transforming traditional one-to-many interactions into many-to-many interactions

3.2
inaccurate information
information that is false

Note 1 to entry: Inaccurate information may be spread purposefully or without purpose.

Note 2 to entry: The scientific term "misinformation" includes inaccurate information that is spread without purpose.

3.3
purposefully misleading information
inaccurate information (3.2) that was distributed purposely or intentionally omitted information or intentionally modified information

Note 1 to entry: The scientific term is "disinformation".

4   Understanding social media

4.1   General

With increasing digitalization, a growing number of social media platforms and channels are available, and the selection and popularity of these are continually changing. Social media is available worldwide but access to some platforms and channels can be restricted in some countries. Some platforms and channels focus on exchanging text messages, others focus on sharing photographs or videos, and some permit the sharing of text, photos and videos. Many can include links to any content stored on the internet.

There is a connection between social media and other media such as newspapers, radio and television. People also share news articles and information on social media.

Annex A provides types of social media channels, platforms and related tools.

The organization should:

— consider the role of social media in the context of its overall communications strategy, including crisis communication, and how the social media strategy is implemented in the organization;

— understand that the extent to which information is shared depends on the application on which it was shared and the privacy settings of the user who shared the content;

— understand that social media is operated by private companies, and it is governed by their own terms of service or user agreement.

4.2   Utilizing social media

4.2.1   General

The exchange of information through social media will depend on the organization's communication strategy and whether the organization is operating before, during or after incidents or crises.

The organization should consider:

— how social media can improve the organization's capability to manage incidents and crises;

— how social media can reduce the organization's risks by considering risks that can potentially be affected by ineffective communication;

— how fit-for-purpose the organization's social media policies and procedures are to determine if changes are required.

4.2.2   Implementation

The organization should:

— identify and obtain the appropriate tools necessary to implement the use of social media;

— supplement internal resources by using external resources as required;

— ensure that the resources are capable of performing their assigned responsibilities.

A natural progression for the use of social media is to monitor social media communications, then disseminate information to support emergency management objectives. This is then followed by interaction with social media users (public or private stakeholders) to answer questions and build trust with the social media audience.

The organization should conduct a regular review of social media as part of its overall continual improvement process.

4.2.3 Monitoring

4.2.3.1 Purpose

The organization should monitor the use of social media in order to:

— identify the social media platforms used by its audience;

— improve awareness of the environment in which it is operating;

— identify how it is perceived by the public and various stakeholders who can be impacted by its operations and risks;

— identify current and emerging issues, including issues that require a response;

— identify influential users of social media and metadata tags that can relate to the organization;

— understand how citizens or stakeholders are using social media related to the organization;

— identify other emergency services or service providers with similar risks or emergency management messaging, or both.

NOTE   A metadata tag is a keyword used in social media that is assigned to a piece of information to facilitate search. A hashtag is an example for a metadata tag.

4.2.3.2 Span of monitoring

The organization should:

— monitor topics, groups or individuals relevant to its objectives;

— determine the appropriate geographic span of monitoring, ranging from fairly narrow and restricted to one community to worldwide monitoring;

— base the extent of the monitoring on the size, nature and impact of an incident.

4.2.3.3 The quality of information

The organization should assess the quality of information obtained from monitoring social media to ensure it is of high quality. It should validate the information for accuracy and quality before using the information for prevention and preparedness, especially for improved situation awareness during response and recovery.

NOTE 1   Factors affecting quality include where and when the information originated, who created it and for what reason. See Annex B for additional information.

The organization should monitor social media for information regarding the risks it presents to the public and various stakeholders, and specific incidents and comments regarding the capability or reputation of the organization.

The organization should:

— select appropriate digital tools for monitoring and analysing social media to improve monitoring efficiency and effectiveness;

— use keywords and metadata tags appropriate for the information it wants to track to help with the monitoring process;

— include all media in its overall monitoring, as well as the organization's blogs and website on which readers can comment;

— use social media to help correct inaccurate information or concerns identified on these platforms.

NOTE 2 Additional information on understanding the use of social media during the different phases of emergency management is included in Annex C. There are tools and services available that can monitor multiple networks and channels (see Annex A).

4.2.3.4 Monitoring during response and recovery

The amount or intensity of social media communication can be significantly greater during the response and recovery phases, with the response phase likely to be the greatest as resource requirements can quickly exceed the resources available within the organization.

The organization should identify the external resources necessary to ensure that adequate monitoring can be maintained. Additional resources can include emergency services, organizations with similar interests that are willing to help and organizations that specialize in providing social media services.

4.2.4 Dissemination

The organization should provide ongoing information to the public and various stakeholders.

Before an incident: by transmitting messages that focus on preventing or preparing for emergencies and tips for effectively using social media during an incident.

When an incident or crisis has occurred: by transmitting information that focuses primarily on responding to, and recovering from, a specific event. The organization should keep an accurate record of the messages communicated, recording the platform, date, time, text and level of approval where applicable.

Typical messages to the public and various stakeholders can include information on:

— preferred or official methods for reporting an incident and the consequences for not using these;

— platforms and channels available for reporting incidents or receiving information about emergencies;

— potential hazards such as potential forest fires during dry spells;

— tests of the alert system, alerts and expected actions to be taken, such as self-preparedness, and avoidance of hazardous situations;

— where and when official updates will be posted;

— which organizations are responding to the incident and the role of each.

NOTE For organizations performing a public warning function, ISO 22322 gives guidance on how to integrate public warnings with social media and on timely decision-making to take place between monitoring and dissemination.

4.2.5 Interaction

The organization should interact with social media users in a timely manner, as social media users expect a faster response to comments or questions posted online than from a request sent via email. This enables the organization to build and maintain relationships and trust with the public, before, during and after an incident or a crisis.

The organization should interact with social media users by:

— answering questions about risks and how the public can prepare for, respond to incidents;

— answering questions about how the public can assist (e.g. donation management, volunteering);

— requesting and gathering information to assess the public's level of preparedness, awareness of emergency procedures, willingness to help and ability to improve situational awareness;

— providing guidance for sharing relevant information;

— guiding the public on appropriate social media behaviour;

— correcting inaccurate information by providing clarification;

— ignoring inappropriate comments by predefined criteria.

5 Planning

5.1 General

The organization should:

— consider the implications of regulations, its own policies, potential benefits and threads when planning its use of social media;

— develop its social media objectives and strategy;

— provide sufficient resources for implementation.

5.2 Policies

The organization should ensure its policies are adequate to support the use of social media.

5.3 Risk

The organization should:

— consider the risk of using and not using social media to support emergency management;

— develop strategies and objectives to address these risks;

— minimize risk by providing adequate financial and trained human resources to develop and maintain capability to use social media, especially during an emergency or crisis situation;

— identify how social media information will be assessed and verified to ensure adequate quality for its intended use;

— develop procedures to prevent the posting of confidential or inappropriate information;

— develop procedures on how to address inaccurate information and especially purposefully misleading information posted on social media;

— manage the expectations of the public and stakeholders regarding the use of social media for reporting emergencies, responding to social media posts and the use of social media to remain informed.

NOTE   Guidance on risk management is given in ISO 31000.

5.4 Social media objectives

The organization should support its emergency management by aligning its social media policy with its communication objectives by considering:

— strategies to improve situational awareness and increase efficiency through improved information flow;

— duties to inform citizens and to improve trust and its relationship with the public and various stakeholders;

— ways to provide first-hand information using its own social media platforms and channels;