

Presentation Title: Tag Me in That: Best Practices for Leveraging Social Media in Crisis Communications



Heather Marshall is a senior research specialist in the Safety and Security Division (SAS) of CNA's Institute of Public Research. With seven years' experience in research and analysis, she has written and contributed to several severe weather, disaster response and recovery, and public health after-action reports (AARs), in addition to planning and evaluating exercises. Ms. Marshall received her undergraduate degree from Suffolk University in Political Science and English Literature after completing her honors thesis on the topic of political morality. She has previously worked for the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Scottish Parliament.

Jamie Biglow is a Project Manager in the Safety and Security Division (SAS) of CNA's Institute of Public Research. Over the past 11 years, she has worked on a large array of homeland security and emergency management issues at the county, state, regional, and federal level. She specializes in the development of emergency plans, disaster communications, and cybersecurity. Ms. Bigelow previously worked for the Resilient America Roundtable at The National Academies of Sciences, where she supported communities across the country in their efforts to increase their resilience to natural disasters and other disruptive events.





Presentation Title: Tag Me in That: Best Practices for Leveraging Social Media in Crisis Communications

About the Presentation

Social media is a dynamic communication tool that presents both significant challenges and immense opportunities for emergency management agencies. It allows these agencies to disseminate immediate, potentially life-saving information during emergencies or incidents. Additionally, social media can be utilized to gather crucial information during and after incidents, helping to identify individuals in need of assistance and to develop initial assessments of affected areas. However, many emergency management agencies struggle to effectively leverage social media communications during crises. Numerous stakeholders in the emergency response field could benefit from a more extensive sharing of lessons learned from past real-world incidents. This study seeks to bridge this gap by collecting data from state and local emergency managers with firsthand experience. The research has identified 33 best practices, including innovative methods for preparing crisis communications, tips for coordinating with partner agencies, and strategies for ensuring the inclusion of the entire community. Additionally, the study has pinpointed 23 ongoing challenges and priority areas for growth. The findings from this study will enable state and local agencies to enhance their crisis communications planning, anticipate potential challenges, and reduce the number of unforeseen obstacles during actual events.