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A Social Media Engagement Plan for the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management

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IMPLEMENTING A SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT PLAN AT THE ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Alyssa Moyer, Binghamton University, College of Community and Public Affairs

Fall 2016

Core Capstone Question: How can the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management (OCDEM) better educate and prepare the public for emergency situations?

Why target the citizens of Onondaga County?

Educating the public, as well as motivating a population who are largely underprepared for an emergency are huge issues that lie within updating the County Human

lic and motivating them to better prepare themselves for an emergency becomes a

Public to be appropriately responsive in the event of an emergency. Providing arti

Food/general information when it is a low priority. It is a low priority because inci

Emergency Management (OCDEM) better educate and prepare the public for

Why use social media as a tool of engagement?

Social media has become increasingly popular and is used by millions worldwide. Social

media is a tool that allows one to engage with others through the use of posts that

may include text or pictures. Sharing information with others has never been easier and

has become an increasingly useful tool in the field of Emergency Management. By "pro-

viding community members with tools to engage in crisis preparedness, response, and

recovery, social media may have a role to play in building community resilience: a mea-

sure of a community’s ability to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situ-

ations” (Hughes et. al, 2014, p.365). Residents of Onondaga County do not experience many emergencies or disasters. Thus, they tend to lack the knowledge and willingness to be prepared for such events. However, it is still extremely important to have the prop-

er knowledge on what is happening in your area and how to best respond to any event that may occur. Because social media is already so popular and used by the majority of the population, this would be the best method in reaching and engaging Onondaga County residents. Essentially, "social media tools allow emergency managers to disseminate information to wider audiences, interact with the public, monitor social media networks to get a better sense of what’s happening on the ground during a crisis, get better situational awareness, and improve collaboration for sharing information during an emergency and sharing of best practices and lessons learned” (Yasin, 2010, p.1). Using social media as a means of connecting with the residents would be the best meth-

od for OCDEM to share information. Ultimately, the increased use and presence on so-

cial media will allow OCDEM to better understand the “big picture” and to make better, more informed decisions.

Several conversations with the OCDEM’s Commissioner, Emergency Planner, and the County’s Public Information Officer (PIO) led to the conclusion that the OCDEM needed a stronger social media presence and prepared in the event of an emer-
gency or disaster. The National Seasonal Preparedness Messaging Calendar is an excellent means to educate the public on how to best be prepared for emergencies. The ready.gov “Ready” Campaign is a national public service advertising (PSA) campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to provide Americans with information in regards to numerous common emergencies and hazards, and strategies to prepare and educate the public on these topics. The calendar follows the twelve-month cycle of the year with different topics that pertain to that specific season. Essentially, the goal of the campaign is to “get the public involved and ultimately to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation” (Ready.gov, 2016). The creation of a social media engagement plan that follows the National Seasonal Preparedness Messaging Calendar provides the most useful preparedness information in educating Onondaga County residents.

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