Implementing a Social Media Strategy to Help Municipalities Communicate with Residents about Flood Risk: A Case Study

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Background

- FEMA Region II Coastal Outreach Task Order focused on New York and New Jersey
- Community Partnership Pilot Subtask
Region II Coastal Outreach Program: Goals

- Increase awareness and understanding of coastal flood risk and the means to reduce and transfer this risk;
- Facilitate implementation of actions within the community that reduce and transfer risk;
- Provide for transparency in the scientific and methodological process used to generate the forthcoming new Flood Insurance Rate Maps;
- Foster collaboration with Congressional, State, county, and community officials by sharing accurate and timely risk information, and facilitating their ability to share it with their constituents.
Social Media Pilot

- Borough of Manasquan, NJ selected
- Goal was to establish partnership with local community and offer added-value services
- Pilot program to encourage use of social media tools in municipalities to increase awareness and understanding of flood risk and coastal flood study underway
- As follow up to pilot, will expand to other flood prone communities in Region II
What is Social Media?

Forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

(Source: Merriam-Webster)
Benefits of Social Media

- Complements well when integrated with other outreach efforts
- Low investment of time and money
- High return on stakeholder interaction and awareness
Developing the Training Program

- Assessed Manasquan’s social media resources and capabilities in advance
- Determined what outlets were most appropriate and would be mutually beneficial to both community officials and stakeholders
- Developed customized training to meet their specific needs
Social Media Training

- Training took place in summer 2012 (pre-Sandy)
- One-day session with 7 participants
- Focused on Facebook and Twitter; pages created for community
- Provided introduction to social media: who should post, what to post, when to post, and how often
Social Media Training

- Hands-On Exercises: Disaster Scenarios
- Dealing with negative comments
- Q&A – critical to make sure staff are comfortable with the tools and understand before handing off to them
Social Media Training: Key Points

- Attract followers by becoming the lead source for information about community events and important announcements; become a "must-follow" for residents and other stakeholders.
- Posts don’t have to be (and shouldn’t be) only about flood risk.
- Leverage other organizations’ social media feeds.
After the Training

- Handed off Facebook and Twitter accounts to community to manage, checking in regularly
- Spreadsheet of ready-to-go key message posts about flood risk and safety – staff can quickly and easily issue messages
- RAMPP staff available for questions/monitor sites to ensure no problems and to ensure the community was actively posting
After the Training

- Manasquan has limited/busy staff – at times difficult to post as frequently as desired
- ‘FEMA Fridays’ – Each Friday, repost a message from FEMA about flood risk/safety. Thought up by the Borough – helped them to remember to post regularly.
Evaluating Effectiveness

- Before, During and After Sandy
Before Sandy

Great advice from FEMA!

(Oct. 26) As Sandy moves north and its effect on the East Coast remain uncertain, make sure you have an emergency kit for each person in your household. Include items such as canned food, water, batteries, first aid kit, flashlight, and more. For a full list of emergency kit items, visit http://www.ready.gov/basic-disaster-supplies-kit.

Like · Comment

MJ Love, Margaret Machnicki and 2 others like this.
During Sandy

Borough of Manasquan · 4,383 like this
October 29, 2012 at 6:14pm ·

Extensive Hurricane Winds and Tidal Forces Cause Difficulties Boroughwide

Power outages throughout town. Cell phone and internet service is sporadic. If you are home and in a non-evacuation area, please do not leave home. Winds gusts are peaking and high tide is still affecting flooding throughout town.

Command Center continues to respond and monitor storm and borough activities. Police, Volunteer Fire, First Aid and OEM and Department Staff on site throughout the community. Record levels of Hurricane activity challenges borough but entire borough forces dispatched to protect the community.

Listen to 1620am, the website, facebook or twitter.

Visit us on facebook to view photos and video of the storm

Like · Comment

Michelle Thompson, Sombul Augustine, Leigh Gaffney and 2 others like this.

Anton Budrecki want to let you guys know that you all have been doing one hell of a fantastic job with keeping people informed! GREAT JOB GUYS!! many other towns and counties should check you guys out and learn how to inform the public!
October 29, 2012 at 6:18pm · 8

Melissa Ashley Klinger Yes. Thank you all so much. We are forever grateful
October 29, 2012 at 6:18pm via mobile · 5

Ellen Winkler Lafferty Agreed! Manasquan is the best town!
October 29, 2012 at 6:24pm via mobile · 1
What happens when the power goes out?

Borough of Manasquan

October 30, 2012 at 3:38pm

Dear Facebook Fans, we have limited internet, cell, and electricity. Please be patient as we slowly get back online. We will update you as often as we can. Thank you.

http://manasquan.patch.com/articles/officials-power-will-be-out-at-least-7-10-days

Officials: Power is still out across Manasquan. More than 5,000 Manasquanites have no power.

Borough of Manasquan

November 6

Nor'ester Map for Wednesday (2 photos)
High Tide Map from our Borough's Command Center — at Manasquan Beach.
UPDATE: The Borough has just experienced the worst storm in recent memory and is currently in the recovery phase...

Initial search and rescue missions have been completed. Damage assessment and debris removal is underway on beach areas. DPW is currently working to repair damage and restore essential services.

Power:

JCP&L reports 2.5 million customers are still without power with Middlesex County most affected.

Water:

You may have received an automatic water shutoff notification. This notification is for your protection. The water is safe to use. The shutoff is temporary as its been compromised. The phone call did NOT come from Manasquan. Manasquan's water system has not been impacted.

Sewer:

Monmouth County Sewage Authority has not been impacted.

Shelter:

A shelter is being run by Monmouth County at the Community Center on Atlantic Avenue in Wall. The center is open 24 hours a day. The information posted is from the FEMA website.

FEMA assistance for residents can include assistance to cover rental and temporary housing, grants for repairs or to replace personal property, unemployment payments, and more. (a full list is available at http://www.fema.gov/news-release/federal-aid-programs-state-nj-may-october-disaster-recovery). Residents can apply for assistance from FEMA in the following ways:

- Apply online at http://www.disasterassistance.gov/
- Apply through a mobile device at m.fema.gov
- Call 1-800-621-FEMA or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for hearing and speech impaired.

Go to a disaster recovery center in your area
http://www.fema.gov/disaster-recovery-centers

DisasterAssistance.gov - Home
www.disasterassistance.gov
Disaster survivors can register for help from the Federal government online at DisasterAssistance.gov following all presidentially declared disasters that have been designated for individual assistance. Seventeen Federal agencies cooperate to provide assistance.
After Sandy

Borough of Manasquan changed their cover photo.
May 24

Manasquan Beach Officially Re-Opened! Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, Senator Singer, Mayor Dempsey, Assemblyman Ribeł — at Manasquan Beach, NJ.

Like · Comment · Share

259 people like this.

Angela Mauriello YAAAAAYYYY! Wish the weather would cooperate.
May 24 at 3:48pm via mobile · Like · 1

Lynn Connolly Buddy's old haunt. 1971-1012 Gazebo rebuilt 5/2013 Manasquan Beach Inlet.
May 24 at 5:32pm · Like

Michelle Belt Armstrong Bce will be in OCNJ on saturday
May 24 at 8:12pm via mobile · Like

Christine Constantinou Did you stop at the DQ?
May 25 at 12:18am via mobile · Like · 1

Marsha Margolin Chasinov YAY!!!!!
May 25 at 7:37am · Like
By the Numbers

- Facebook ‘Likes’
  - 10/28: 558
  - 11/28: 3,889
  - 6/11: 4,385

Total Reach:
The number of unique people who have seen any content associated with your Page
Lessons Learned

- Have a plan for when the power goes out
- Keep it positive / human interest stories
- Social media is one tool within a bigger toolbox
- Success contingent on the information and people behind it