Tips for how individuals, groups and communities can use Facebook before, during and after disasters

Prepare & Respond

Help your community with READINESS
Support and organize RESPONSE AND RELIEF initiatives
Engage in ongoing RECOVERY efforts
Help build community RESILIENCE
Facebook can be a useful tool to help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Organizations, governments and individuals are turning to Facebook to help get their messages out — whether to lead and rally friends and neighbors around different disaster-related events; gather and disseminate timely and reliable information from diverse sources; or share important updates from first responders. This guide aims to share useful tips and examples of best practices to help you most effectively use Facebook before, during and after a disaster.

For more information — or to share your own tips and success stories — find us on Facebook at facebook.com/disaster.
How to use Facebook before, during and after disasters

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facebook.com/disaster
Using Facebook allows disaster response and relief organizations to engage their community members as part of the team, quickly connecting the community to efforts focused on staying safe and informed. Knowing how to best use Facebook’s tools can help different kinds of disaster-related organizations prepare for and respond to emergency and disaster events.
Core Features

On Facebook, Pages are the foundation for your organization to open a two-way communication channel with the community of people interested in your work. The different features of Facebook Pages — like Timeline, Cover and Profile Photos, the About section — allow your organization to tell robust stories and have engaging and enduring interactions with your followers.

Tips for creating an engaging Page:

- Choose a Cover Photo that helps tell the story of your organization and your mission
- Choose a Profile picture that easily identifies your organization to those who know you and those who don’t
- Use the About section of your Page to clearly state your organization’s mission, vision and values
- Post frequently with relevant and timely information
- Like and follow Facebook Pages related to your organization’s work, and share posts and links from those Facebook Pages with your followers

Examples

American Red Cross

World Food Program USA

United Way

Learn More
facebook.com/help/pages
Core Features

Page Posts

Page Posts are the primary way for your organization to communicate with people who follow your Facebook Page.

Use Posts:
- To increase general community engagement
- To alert community members to available resources and connect them with appropriate organizations
- To let people know how to access relief and aid
- To support and highlight emergency preparedness and awareness activities

Examples

United Way Tornado Recovery

American Red Cross Chapter Snapshot

Oxfam America Typhoon Haiyan Relief

Before
Create a Page posting strategy designed to keep people informed in advance of any disasters. Regularly posting helps position your organization as a credible and reliable resource during disasters. For example, post relevant preparedness tips to remind people of the steps they can take to keep themselves and loved ones safe in the event of severe weather.

During
Timing is crucial — post regularly with photos and videos, share links to more in-depth information, and, when appropriate, target posts to people in specific locations. Be sure to stay in contact with your followers by frequently responding to questions and feedback in the comments sections of your posts.

After
Post direct and clear information about where community members can receive aid and how they can help in the recovery effort through donations or volunteer opportunities.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/sharing
Photos and videos can make your posts more interesting and accessible, and are a great way to share authentic and engaging content.

Use Photos and Videos:
- To enhance and support text-based posts
- To better communicate the severity of particular emergency situations
- To show the progress of recovery efforts

Before
Make photos and videos a regular part of your Page posting strategy. This kind of authentic content can help engage your audience so that during a disaster your organization is a trusted source of information.

During
As a disaster develops, post photos and videos as a way to communicate what's happening and where.

After
Use photos and videos to help tell a compelling story about the recovery effort and your organization's role in it.

Examples
- World Food Program USA Typhoon Relief
- American Red Cross Earthquake Relief
- UNICEF USA Water Supply Restoration

Learn More
facebook.com/help/photos/uploading
Use Facebook Groups to coordinate and organize different groups of people. Groups can be open, closed or secret, depending on how private you want a particular group to be.

**Use Groups:**
- For internal coordination
- To organize volunteers and their tasks
- As a dedicated communication channel for staff and local chapters
- To communicate privately with strategic partners and agencies

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**Before**
Create a Facebook Group around a defined outcome or goal, like spreading the word about preparedness or recruiting volunteers, and invite people to join it.

**During**
Use Groups to quickly relay information to specific groups of people and connect members to each other.

**After**
Create and maintain Facebook Groups focused on particular concerns and needs that may spring up in the aftermath of a disaster.

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**Examples**

**Oxfam Action Corps**
New York City

**American Red Cross | Social Heroes**

**United Way of Greater Atlanta Young Professional Leaders**

Learn More: [facebook.com/help/groups](https://www.facebook.com/help/groups)
Core Features

Events

Facebook Events are a great way to bring people together, either on Facebook or in person, before, during or after a disaster. When people accept an invitation, they’ll be able to participate in a conversation on the Event page, and will be reminded of the upcoming event through Facebook.

Use Events:
- To bring your community together for a common goal
- To raise awareness for a particular disaster
- As a way to promote online or in-person donation and volunteer opportunities

Before
Use Facebook Events to schedule and promote awareness and preparedness activities.

During
When your organization is working in a community affected by a disaster, create a Facebook Event as quickly as possible after the disaster strikes to help direct people to the closest place they can receive help.

After
Use Facebook Events to organize and coordinate in-person donations and collections like blood or food drives, or online initiatives.

Examples

UNICEF World Water Day Art Contest
American Red Cross Gabrielle Giffords Honorary Save-a-Life Saturday
Second Harvest Food Bank Food and Fund Drive

Learn More
facebook.com/help/events
Other Helpful Features

Hashtags

Hashtags, indicated by a “#” in front of a word or phrase, turn those words or phrases into clickable links. This makes your post easily found when people are searching for a particular topic.

**Use Hashtags:**
- To provide updates on a specific emergency event
- To let people in the community know where they can get help
- To bring attention to your organization’s activities
- As a way to lead or join a broader conversation about a particular disaster or topic

Learn More
facebook.com/help/hashtags

Notes

Notes offer a way to communicate longer content, similar in length to a news article or blog post, to those who follow your organization on Facebook and to the broader community.

**Use Notes:**
- To provide in-depth details about preparedness activities
- As a way to update community members about recent emergency events

Learn More
facebook.com/help/notes

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Support Links for Areas Affected by Sandy

The Red Cross isn’t the only group of people using teams of digital volunteers to help the many, many people affected by Superstorm Sandy. There are thousands of people creating webpages, Facebook pages, Facebook groups and Twitter accounts to get the word out about need and assistance.

The American Red Cross is currently doing its part to provide emergency services along with other major organizations. But those big organizations can’t do it alone. This is a team effort. Our Red Cross digital volunteers have started a collection of links that include groups and sites focused on helping in the aftermath of the storm. Please consider sharing additional links in the comments. This page will constantly change. Feel free to message digital volunteer Jen Reeves (http://facebook.com/jeniereaves), if you are interested in collaborating.

SANDY GROUPS, PAGES, WEBSITES (Facebook and Twitter)

- Hurricane Sandy 2012 Help and Resources Page
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/39888219227625/
  https://humanityead.org/Sandy.htm

- Breezy Point
  Breezy Point Cooperative Hurricane Sandy Information
  https://www.facebook.com/BreezyPointCooperativeHurricaneSandyInformation
Other Helpful Features

Follow Other Pages

Following or liking similar Pages can help you build important connections and alliances with other organizations. It can also help people connected to those Pages find yours more easily.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/follow

Tagging

Tagging another Page creates a link to that Page from within your post. Tagging other information sources can increase the reach of your content, help add credibility to your posts, and allow your Facebook followers to discover and access new resources on Facebook.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/tagging

Page Messages

Your Page can use Messages, enabling you to receive direct communication from people on Facebook. Messages are a great way for people to share information with your organization when they aren’t aware of other ways to reach you.

Use Messages:
- To give people another way to share information with your organization
- As a supplemental communication channel for people looking for help or answers
- To receive and share time-sensitive information

Learn More
facebook.com/help/pagemessages
Key Takeaways

1. Post regularly to keep people engaged and informed so that your organization’s Page becomes a trusted resource.

2. Share photos and videos to help make your organization’s posts more interesting and engaging.

3. Be responsive: Answer questions and encourage community members to share the information they learn from you.

4. Join the conversation: Engage with your Page followers in the comments section of your posts.

5. Use Facebook Groups and Events to organize people locally.

6. Highlight other experts and organizations by sharing their posts and links, and by tagging groups you work with in your posts.

7. Use hashtags to lead or join broader conversations happening on Facebook.
Tips for First Responders and Government Agencies

Knowing how to best use Facebook can allow first responders and government agencies to engage the public as part of their team, and to quickly connect the community to help people stay safe and informed.
On Facebook, Pages are the foundation for your agency to open a two-way communication channel with your community. The different features of Facebook Pages — like Timeline, Cover and Profile Photos, the About section — allow your agency to tell a robust story and have engaging and enduring interactions with the people you serve.

To create an engaging Page:
- Choose a Cover photo that shows how your agency works to serve and protect your community
- Choose a Profile picture that easily identifies your agency to those who know you and those who don’t
- Use the About section to outline your agency’s mission, vision and values
- Post frequently with relevant and timely information
- Like and follow related and similar Facebook Pages, including community organizations, community leaders and other agencies, and share relevant posts, photos, videos and links with your followers
- Create “evergreen” content, such as disaster preparedness tips or useful contact numbers, that can be easily and reliably accessed

Examples

New South Wales Rural Fire Service
California Office of Emergency Services
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Learn More
facebook.com/help/pages
Page Posts are the primary way for your agency to communicate with people who follow your Facebook Page.

**Use Posts:**
- To increase community engagement
- To promote and support emergency preparedness and awareness activities
- For updating people on the status of a particular event, including the actions of first responders on the ground
- To inform people of how to access relief and aid

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**Before**
Create a Page posting strategy designed to help keep people engaged and informed. For example, post timely preparedness tips related to potential disaster events (such as impending severe weather).

**During**
Timing is crucial — post and update your Page regularly with the latest information, relevant photos and videos, and links to more in-depth information. And don't forget to participate in the conversation happening on your Page by regularly responding to key questions in the comments section of the posts on your Page.

**After**
Post clear information about where community members can find official information, receive aid, or help in the community’s recovery efforts. Invite people to share any information they have about citizen-led relief and recovery efforts.

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**Examples**

[California Office of Emergency Services](https://www.facebook.com/caloes)


[San Francisco Fire Department Neighborhood Emergency Response Team](https://www.facebook.com/sffdner)
Core Features

Photos and Videos

Photos and videos can help “put a face on” your agency, make your updates more interesting and accessible and are great for sharing authentic and engaging content.

Use Photos and Videos:
• To increase the community’s understanding of first responders and their roles and duties
• As a way to help communicate the severity of emergency situations
• To demonstrate ways people can prepare for, respond to and/or recover from a disaster

Before
Photos help put a face on your agency, which can reinforce and increase your connection with the public. Routinely posting them can help you build and engage your audience, making you a more trusted resource.

During
As a disaster develops, post photos and videos to help tell the story about what’s happening and where. Share Facebook photos and videos from other sources like news outlets, other response agencies and organizations, and citizens — to help tell a more robust story of unfolding events.

After
Use photos to let the public know what first responders are doing to help communities recover and rebuild after a disaster.

Examples

New South Wales Rural Fire Service Fire Updates
FEMA Video About Thunderstorm Safety
San Francisco Fire Department Neighborhood Emergency Response Team

Learn More
facebook.com/help/photos/uploading
Use Facebook Groups to coordinate and organize people. Groups can be open, closed or secret, depending on how private you want the group to be.

**Use Groups:**
- To create a dedicated communication channel for family members of first responders
- For internal coordination among shifts and crews
- To organize volunteers and tasks, such as a team to manage and monitor your agency’s different social media channels
- To communicate privately with strategic partners and agencies

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**Before**
Create a Facebook Group around a defined outcome or goal — like organizing or coordinating community activities — and invite people to join it.

**During**
Use Groups to quickly relay targeted information to relevant people responsible for specific tasks or activities.

**After**
Create and maintain Groups focused on particular concerns and needs that may spring up in the aftermath of a disaster event.

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**Example**

FEMA Reservists

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Learn More
facebook.com/help/groups
Other Helpful Features

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**Events**

Facebook Events are a great way to bring people together, either on Facebook or in person, before, during or after a disaster. When people accept an invitation, they’ll be able to participate in a conversation on the Event page, and will be reminded of the upcoming event through Facebook.

**Use Events:**
- To bring your community together — on Facebook or in person — for a common goal
- As a way to raise awareness for a particular disaster
- To create and promote donation and volunteer opportunities
- To organize Community Emergency Response Teams, First Aid and CPR Training

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**Before**
Use Facebook Events to schedule and promote preparedness trainings.

**During**
If your agency is outside of an area affected by a disaster, it can immediately offer help by hosting Facebook Events, like a food or clothing drive, to bring relief to communities impacted by the disaster.

**After**
Use Facebook Events to organize and coordinate relief and recovery teams.

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**Examples**

- New South Wales Rural Fire Service Open Station Day
- San Francisco Fire Department Neighborhood Emergency Response Training
- California Office of Emergency Services California Day of Preparedness

Learn More
facebook.com/help/events
Hashtags, indicated by a “#” in front of a word or phrase, turn those words or phrases into clickable links. This makes the post easily found as people are searching for a particular topic.

Use Hashtags:
- So that updates on an evolving emergency event are searchable
- To potentially expand the audience for your posts
- As a way to lead or join a broader conversation about a particular disaster or topic

Learn More
facebook.com/help/hashtags

Notes offer a way to communicate longer content, similar in length to a news article or blog post, to the public and those who follow your agency.

Use Notes:
- To explain and highlight severe weather warnings
- To provide in-depth details about preparedness activities
- For long-form updates about recent emergency events

Learn More
facebook.com/help/notes

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Hashtags, indicated by a “#” in front of a word or phrase, turn those words or phrases into clickable links. This makes the post easily found as people are searching for a particular topic.

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Learn More
facebook.com/help/notes

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Hashtags

FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency
August 7

#Iselle water tip: If stores are out of bottled water, you can store water at home so you have it for drinking/sanitation. Fill clean pots or large, clean containers with water so the water is ready to use if needed. Each person should have at least one gallon of water allocated to them per day, so store accordingly.

Like · Comment · Share

FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency
August 6

Who we’re following for #Iselle and #Julia updates in Hawaii

- Hawaii State Civil Defense
- Hawaii Red Cross
- Honolulu Department of Emergency Management

Notes

NSW Rural Fire Service
September 4, 2012

Total fire ban as warm and windy weather strikes 4 September 2012

A Total Fire Ban has been declared across parts of NSW for Wednesday 5 September, due to forecast warm and windy conditions.

The Total Fire Ban covers the following fire weather areas:

- Greater Sydney (including Blue Mountains and Central Coast)
- Hawkesbury/Nepean
- Grampians
- Southern Ranges
- For South Coast
- North Western
- Monaro Alpine
- Upper Central West Plains
- Lower Central West Plains
- Central Ranges
- Far Western

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the Total Fire Ban has been declared due to the onset of higher temperatures and gusty winds.

“The wind is going to be the main concern across a large part of the state, with gusts of around 100 kilometres an hour forecast,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“Under those conditions, any fires which do start have the

NSW Rural Fire Service
August 30, 2012

Smoke expected as hazard reduction activity increases

31 August 2012

Fire agencies will step up their preparations for the bush fire season this weekend, with dozens of controlled hazard reduction burns scheduled.

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said around 170 burns are scheduled this week, with 10 this weekend alone.

NSW RFS volunteer firefighters will join with NSW Fire and Rescue, NSW Parks and Wildlife and Forests NSW to complete the burns.

“This is important work ahead of bush fire season which will help protect people and where they live,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“Over the last few years we have experienced significant rainfall which has made hazard reduction difficult and we currently have a window of opportunity to complete as much of this work as possible.

“Smoke will be noticeable across many areas this weekend, particularly Sydney.”
Other Helpful Features

Follow Other Pages

Following or liking similar Pages can help you build important connections and alliances with other agencies and community leaders. It can also help people connected to those Pages more easily find yours.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/follow

Tagging

Tagging another Page in a post creates a link to that Page from within your post. Tagging other Pages can increase the reach of — and help add credibility to — your posts, and allow your Facebook followers to discover and access new resources on Facebook.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/tagging

Page Messages

Pages can use Messages, enabling your agency to receive direct communication from people on Facebook. Messages are a great way for people to communicate with you when they don’t know how else to reach your agency, or when phone lines are down but internet access is uninterrupted.

Use Messages:

- To enable your community another direct communication channel to your agency
- As a way to provide direct support to people in the community looking for help or answers
- To receive and share time-sensitive information

Learn More
facebook.com/help/pagemessages
**Key Takeaways**

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Create a Page — managed by agency staff and/or volunteers — to facilitate a dialogue between your agency and the public — not just as a one-way communication tool. This dialogue will help you keep the public informed and quickly address misinformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Post regular updates so that your Page becomes a trusted resource during a disaster.</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Share photos and videos to help you better communicate important information and to make your posts more engaging.</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Organize a volunteer social media staff to help manage your agency’s Facebook presence, especially during a disaster when people are turning to your Page for information and answers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Include hashtags in your posts to join the broader conversation happening on Facebook, and to make your content more easily searchable.</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Tag other organizations you are working with in your posts.</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Use Facebook to learn what’s going on in your community and re-share any content your agency thinks might be helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Allow followers to message your Page for quick assistance and answers to time sensitive questions.</td>
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Individuals and communities use Facebook to stay connected to each other, share important information and organize activities. These kinds of activities are especially important during times of disaster, and knowing how to make the most of Facebook’s different tools and features can help people put Facebook to work for them during these difficult times.
Posts and Status Updates are the primary way people share information on Facebook.

**Use Posts and Status Updates:**
- To share what you’re seeing and feeling with family, friends and your community
- To let people know you’re safe and where you are
- As a way to communicate with organizations and first responders about what is happening around you

**Photos and Videos** help you better express to people on Facebook what you’re seeing and experiencing.

**Use Photos and Videos:**
- To communicate the severity of emergency situations
- To help people, including organizations and first responders, get on-scene, visual information
- To help connect people with items and pets lost during a disaster
Hashtags, indicated by a “#” in front of a word or phrase, turn those words or phrases into clickable links. This makes the post easily found as people are searching for a particular topic.

**Use Hashtags:**
- To bring attention to what you’re experiencing
- To provide updates on a specific emergency event
- To lead or join in a broader conversation about a disaster by using existing hashtags. You can find topical hashtags by using Facebook Search

Learn More
facebook.com/help/hashtags

Use Facebook Search to find out specific information by location, people, news organizations and key words.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/facebooksearch
Share Information

Messages

Facebook Messages (or the Messenger app on your mobile device) is one of the fastest ways to reach friends and family. It can be a great alternative when phone lines are down but internet access is uninterrupted.

Use Messages:
- To easily and quickly communicate with an individual or a small group of people
- To share time-sensitive information

Learn More
facebook.com/help/messenger

Tagging

Tagging other Facebook Profiles and Pages creates a link to that Profile or Page from within your post. This allows your Facebook friends and those who follow you to discover and access new sources of information.

Learn More
facebook.com/help/tagging
Pages are a way for people to share stories and information, communicate what’s happening around them and organize communities on Facebook. You can create a Page about a specific disaster or topic, or more generally for your community. Pages can be customized by posting stories, hosting events, adding apps and more.

To create an engaging Page:

- Choose Cover and Profile photos that help tell the story of your Page
- Use the About section to explain the purpose of your Page
- Post frequently with relevant and timely information
- Like and follow related or similar Facebook Pages, including nonprofits and NGOs, community leaders and other agencies
- Share relevant posts, photos, videos and links from other Pages with your followers

Examples

Jersey Shore Hurricane News
Typhoon Haiyan Relief for Northern Palawan – Tao Philippines
Colorado Wildfire Information

Learn More
facebook.com/help/pages
Use Facebook Groups to coordinate and organize people. Groups can be open, closed or secret, depending on how private you want the group to be.

**Use Groups:**
- To share information to prepare for a severe weather event
- For organizing volunteers and tasks
- To bring people in your community together to recover and reconnect after a disaster

**Examples**

- **Oklahoma Tornado Photo Recovery**
- **Boston Strong**
- **Drought Help Group**

Learn More
facebook.com/help/groups
Organize

Events

Create a Facebook Event as a way to gather people in person or online before, during or after a disaster. When people accept your invitation, they can interact with other people on the Event page, and get related Facebook reminders and notifications.

Use Events:
- To bring your community together for a common goal
- To raise awareness for a particular disaster
- To create and promote donation and volunteer opportunities

Examples

One Run for Boston 2

#SFStrong San Francisco in Support of Isla Vista

Jersey Shore Hurricane News

Learn More
facebook.com/help/events
## Key Takeaways

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