Leveraging Social Media for Disaster Preparedness

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Presenters
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Susan Dugan

This is Susan. I am excited about our presenter today. That is Stacy Elmer. Stacy Elmer, MA, EMP, is the Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) at the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Prior to her current position, Stacy worked for Governor of Kansas as the lead for health issues in the offices of Hispanic and Latino American Affairs and African American Affairs. Stacy is also a trained EMT and forensic technician and joined ASPRs DMORT team in Haiti facilitating the identification of remains of American citizens in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. Since joining ASPR two years ago, Stacy has taken on various special projects for Dr. Lurie including response and recovery issues related to Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and she helps stand up ASPR's recovery office, and of course she also works with social media.

She studied neuroscience at the Colorado College and received a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Kansas. Stacy, thank you so much for joining us today. (00:00:36)

Stacy Elmer

Absolutely, thanks for having me.

Good morning everybody. Again, my name is Stacy Elmer and thanks for joining us today. I am from the Office of Preparedness and Response and I do lead ASPR in a lot of social media projects and I will talk about those later.

Normally I like to start with a little audience participation. These webinars are new to me. A new form of media itself but I just wanted you to take a moment and think about how you feel about the use of social media and whatever organization you work in. I was looking at the participant list and you guys really challenge me on this one because you are all over the place in terms of who is out there in the audience. I'm going to try to make this relevant to everybody. (00:01:20)

When you think about social media and the use of it in disaster preparedness and whatever respect your job entails. Do you think about it as the happy face (A) or the shocked or scared face (B). Or do you think about it and you would like to scream and run away or is it something that you cheer about? So my goal today is, if you are on the left side, is to move you over to the right. Even if you are just moved over a teeny tiny bit. (00:01:52)

So these days, social media is all over the place. We have social media that our kids use, we have apps on our phone, we have social media like Twitter causing revolutions across the world. And then we have social media like the iFART application which is one of my little cousin's favorites, that just makes farting noises on your phone. So what does this have to do with public health and disaster preparedness? That is the question we are trying to answer today. (00:02:27)

So what I am going to try to do for you today is take a look at how can we leverage social media for disaster preparedness and response in whatever realm of that public health or disaster preparedness that

you are in. So, just as an overview of how we will go about this today, I'm going to try to fly through this presentation because I can talk about this stuff forever and I want to try and leave some time for questions at the end. (00:02:50)

So very briefly for those of you who don't know, ASPR, the office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response is responsible for Preparing For, Responding To, and now Recovering From public health emergencies. So that means bio-terrorist events like anthrax, smallpox, natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, both of which we have had in DC recently. And then health pandemics like H1N1. So what I'm going to do today is go through our use of social media and recent events. Not ASPR specifically but the use of social media in three events that ASPR participated in. I'm going to talk about GIS technology. I'm going to provide a conceptual framework for you. I think one of the hardest parts about this stuff is trying to figure out how to think about this stuff in a way that it is not completely overwhelming. And then I'm going to try to make it relevant for you, but that is a challenging job on this call because there are so many of you out there with a wide variety of backgrounds and jobs. So that's the outline for what we are going to try and do. (00:03:53)

We will start with these events. So when I came into ASPR it was in the middle of H1N1 and we were not engaging with social media at all. But what I began to notice as we went through this event, was that the use of social media, while not being used by ASPR or HHS at large, there are a lot of people out there both public and private entities using social media in a variety of ways. So one way -- I am actually going to try to provide you with a number of ways to think about social media and disaster preparedness. One way is the difference between information coming in and what we can use social media to learn about events as they happen, and information going out. So H1N1, here's a good example, Google flu used – well so Google created something called Google flu during H1N1 to try to see what they could do to have better surveillance of the pandemic and what they did is they monitored Google search terms that people were using during the pandemic to try and get an early sign of flu outbreak. Things like, they monitored the use of 'flu symptoms' or 'fever' or whatever the terms were, to track the outbreak of H1N1. So what they found was, based on their experiment, they were able to have better situational awareness, earlier than our traditional surveillance systems. They knew when and where people were getting sick before our surveillance systems were picking it up And we will talk later about some problems with that but I just want to use that as an example of the way we can think about information coming in through the use of social media. (00:05:42)

People also used social media to push messaging out. So there were a lot of state health departments particularly that were pushing out the availability of flu vaccines. Georgia and Virginia did this to alert the public about H1N1 vaccine and in some cases patients were arriving to pharmacies and essentially clearing out all of the flu vaccine before folks could get there who were receiving information on the waves via radio on our normal channels for communications and so this isn't an official - No one did an official study about this but basically what happened is we talked to a lot of the health department folks and we asked how did you know people were finding this out by Twitter and not some other mechanism? They said people were getting there so fast we couldn't figure out where they were coming from and we were asking how they did it. And people were arriving within ten minutes based off of just a Twitter tweet saying that the H1N1 vaccine was available. So that's an example on the right. (00:06:46)

The next event we are going to talk about is the Haiti earthquake. Social media and the Haiti earthquake was really, really amazing. So what you see here is a form of social media that incorporates Twitter, it incorporates GIS technology and then it incorporates bringing people together from all over the world to actually help during response. Ushahidi was an organization which is still in existence. It uses GIS technology and combines it with social networking platforms such as Twitter to provide emergency responders real-time data about the situations happening on the ground. What does that mean? So that means that-- what you see at the bottom left corner is a group of people in someone's living room in Boston I think. This was totally sporadic. These people wanted to do something to help in the Haiti earthquake. They did not want to just contribute money they wanted to do something. So all over the country groups of people got together and what they are doing here is they are monitoring tweets, blogs, and Facebook and online news resources as the earthquake aftermath is happening and geo-tagging the information as it came through. They would see messages on Twitter about all kinds of things. People were twittering that they were stuck under rubble, they were twittering about fallen buildings, they were twittering about all kinds of stuff so they then could geo-tag that information and put it on the map. What

this helped do is align needs and resources before we had other communication tools for knowing where people were. It was a pretty amazing situation because hundreds of people across the US ended up helping create these maps during the Haiti earthquake. So within 10 minutes of a text being sent from someone, from a victim of the earthquake, the message was sent to a group of volunteers. It was translated, geo-tagged, mapped and then provided to rescue teams on the ground. This was a pretty amazing grass roots effort that happened. (00:08:53)

Finally the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Social media was all over the place with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill as well, particularly the use of GIS technology. What you see here was a similar thing to Ushashidi but this was used to track oiled birds. So they're having a hard time figuring out, where should we send our resources to, to help clean up birds. People would see oiled birds and take photos of them and text those photos to this group, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. And the Louisiana Bucket Brigade would take the metadata – and what I mean by metadata is that every time you take a photograph off of your phone there is, embedded within the photograph, geo-located information. So, if I'm - I am sitting in my uncle's house right now in New Orleans and if I took a picture of his house and text it to you, within that picture is embedded information about where I am. So what you can do with that information is plot all that information on a map and help people know where the needs are and what are they and in this case you can actually see how bad the needs are. Or, I'm sorry, how bad the birds were oiled and you can imagine the same could be true in an emergency if you could actually take photographs of how bad a disaster site was. You would have a lot better information, and a good use of this type of photo tagging and sharing. Actually the Israeli EMS system does this already. Every time they arrive at a scene their responders take a photograph of the scene, text it back to the emergency room and it actually appears on the monitor that the doctors can see before the patients come in. (00:10:26)

Those are three events that ASPR responded to. The people were all over the country were using social media actually aiding the response. We have a GIS platform called MedMap. MedMap is essentially, if you can imagine just a blank map of the United States, of the world. But we'll go with the United States for now. We can put layers onto that map of anything we want. So, what you see right here is a layer where we were doing an exercise about a plume. We were doing a nuclear power plant exercise. They mapped where the plume supposedly was in this exercise in San Clemente, California. So great, now they can see, what you can see on the map is, you can plot hospitals, you can plot – here you are just seeing, to keep it simple, where all the hospitals are. So, what hospitals are going to be affected by this nuclear plume. What you can also do is you can plot information about vulnerable populations. You can plot information about language, you can plot information about the location of healthcare facilities. You can even plot information about things like high incidences of asthma or whatever those things are. If you're having an environmental event it might really matter if you have high populations of people with asthma. So MedMap is a tool that we are developing right now and that we are working with FEMA and some other federal partners to try and share information. But as you can imagine, it really helps us understand who the people are who are living in the areas we are trying to respond to. Why that matters, we will talk about a little bit later. (00:12:10)

So, one thing before we move forward now that you have sort of a sense for what I'm talking about when I say Social Media. I want to try and give you a better idea for what do we mean when we say social media. So, as you see on this slide, I like to refer to all of this stuff as new media. Because if you think about the words social media what that actually means are those tools that actually incorporate some sort of social aspect to the media. So Facebook, for instance. The primary goal of Facebook is a tool for people to communicate and network with one another. But something like the GIS mapping is not really a social media, it's not taking the public and allowing them to participate in our response. But it is a new form of media. It's a way that we can actually use some of the other social media's and incorporate them into a new form of media that we haven't previously had. So, when you hear people talk about new media or social media it is all really the same thing. This is an outline of sort of all, well not all of them, a scope of, just to give you an idea of what I mean when I say new media or social media. I am using those words interchangeably. Mobile apps, social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn, chat rooms, podcasts, video sharing, text messaging. When you see RSS that means Real Simple Syndication which is essentially when you are sending out those Twitter messages that are very short, those are RSS feeds, GIS mapping. So, here is the scope of new or social media. (00:13:38)

That is a lot of stuff to try to think about. So what we have done is to try to lay out, we had a brainstorming session and said, what are the ways in which we can think about social media that helps people in the emergency response and public health roles. Organize our thoughts and also if we organize our thoughts then we can start collaborating in areas where we are specifically working. So, if you are responsible for, let's say response, for a hospital and there is someone across the way who is responsible for response in a federal agency or at a state level, or you are a private company and you're, let's say you are Google and you are responsible for planning and response for Google. If we can start marrying these types of people together we can really have some great collaboration. But what we first need to do is separate out all of these kinds of social media and the ways they are used to think about, how can they be used and then how should they be used? (00:14:31)

So, this was our first shot at a conceptual framework. It's certainly a work in progress. But what I'm going to do for the rest of my time is essentially go through each of these vertical columns. We are going to talk about preparedness and then response and then recovery. And then, we're not specifically going to talk about each of these emergency responders, ordinary people or government. That's just one way we have started thinking about what might be some different objectives or goals people are trying to achieve using social media and me as someone in the public is going to be using social media in a very different way than me as the Special Assistant to Dr. Lurie is going to be thinking about the use of social media. So we are trying to separate out some of that and really for the sake of easing people's frustrations with, wow, there's a lot of stuff out here and I don't really know how to engage. So, we'll go ahead and start going through that. (00:15:23)

So, what I am going to do is just highlight these, talk about them briefly and then give you some examples.

So the use of social media in preparedness includes things like I know that they are trying to move to a text based 911 system. We are pretty far off in getting there but somewhere down the road that's going to happen. Again, the use of mobile apps and cameras provides great preparedness tools. It helps people be better prepared for emergencies. We will talk about how ordinary people can use things like Facebook networks and mobile apps to be better prepared as individuals. And then how governments or private entities can use social media to enhance their own preparedness. (00:16:10)

So I just want to give you some examples to be thinking about this stuff. So, here you see a couple. Here we are talking about how can we decompress our emergency rooms so that if a disaster strikes we have better surge capacity. So as I have already mentioned, one way we can do that is by the use of social media in our actual and our EMS system. So, paramedics and EMS starting to use cameras and video cameras. There is a lot of concern here of course of privacy and that's one reason we haven't engaged in that area yet but I think somewhere down the road, that we will start doing that. There are also a lot of neat ways that private entities and hospitals and healthcare facilities are using social media to help individuals be better prepared. (00:16:58)

So, here you see an example and actually I was just driving through from Biloxi, Mississippi to New Orleans yesterday and saw three of these billboards that were not actually like, exactly like the one you are seeing but that were advertising the text them a number and it would text back to you the current wait times at all the hospitals in the immediate area. As you can imagine this is great on a day-to-day basis but it would also be really useful in an emergency, which is a big thing I want to highlight. Which is, when you're thinking about these social media, we really need to start thinking about things that work on a day-to-day basis are really the only things that are going to work in emergencies. You don't want to launch an app in the middle of an emergency that no one has ever used before. But if we can use start getting people used to doing things like texting a number to get ER wait times, then if we were in a huge event and people were trying to get to a hospital and if one of the first things they thought of was to text in and find out where the shortest wait time were, we might have a natural way to be decompressing emergency rooms during responses and really increasing our surge capacity. (00:18:03)

On the right-hand side you see a similar thing that's actually a mobile app. So, this mobile app helps people figure out not necessarily definitively but what is their symptom and where should they go for it. So we did something similar for flu. We put out an app that helped people determine how sick am I and should I be going to a hospital or should I not be going to the hospital. Mobile apps are a great way to help people help themselves. So, just as we are now going to Google for, you know, I Google everything.

If I get, have some weird symptoms that I'm not sure about the first thing I'm going to do is go to Google and say, ok, you know, what's the likely hood that I need to go to the hospital. Now a lot of private companies are coming out with these mobile apps that help people do that on their own. (00:18:53)

We will talk about where – again, I am not giving a comprehensive view of preparedness, response and recovery. But what I'm trying to do here is point out some ideas and try to give you some ideas for how to think about some of this stuff. So, if we move on to Response. I think this is the area that is sort of the most glamorous, the most sexy in terms of the use of social media. Preparedness stuff, not as, maybe, exciting but I guess preparedness is never quite as exciting for most people as response. So, social media has actually been employed more in Response than in Preparedness and Recovery. As I already talked about, the use of Twitter to report ER wait times and having early situational awareness, which we will talk about in a minute, of events, helping people be able to engage in Response. So, ordinary people who want to be doing something in an event now have this new opportunity to be engaging through the use of social media. And of course, victims of these disasters now have a great tool they can use to actually get messaging out about where they are. So, I don't know how much you all know but engaging with my family in this conversation about, you know, if something were to happen. So, I went through – I was at NBC during both the earthquake and the hurricane. And during the earthquake in particular my parents were trying to call me and they could not get through on the phone. So, when our phone call was over, later that night when they finally got through, they said we were so worried, we didn't know how to get a hold of you and I said, why didn't you just send me a text and they said well what difference would that have made? Well the difference that that make is that, when you place a phone call, if I am trying to call you right now and I can't get through, the minute I hang up that phone, our call is over. When you send out a text, it is very different. So, if I text you right now, and our communication systems are overwhelmed, that text still goes out somewhere. So I think about it like a plane circling over a city that's congested at the airport, waiting to land. That is what your text does when communication systems are overwhelmed. You shoot that text out and it just sits out there until an opening opens up and then your text goes out. So what would have happened during the earthquake if my mom would have texted me instead of trying to call me is that even if I had not immediately received that text, I would have gotten it at some point. So, why does that matter? Well think about if you are trapped under some rubble, after an earthquake, and you want someone to know where you are. How are you going to get that message out? Well if you try and call someone you can't get through and your phone battery dies you are stuck with no communication tool. If you text someone, that message might be sitting out there in the ether for a while but eventually you can rest assured your message is going to get to somebody. So with that in mind we have started to think about how can we leverage, A, that behavior that people are now moving to text in a way that they have not previously. And, how can we then bolster our infrastructure so that people can benefit from the fact that a text works differently than a phone call. (00:22:06)

So let's go to a couple of real-world examples. This is an example, early on kind of when the government response agencies started engaging in social media. Craig Fugate is a huge proponent of social media. He is a great, he is out there just doing it up and I'm really excited about - this was during a San Bernadino gas explosion. So the first thing that Craig Fugate did was went and monitored Twitter. And before he even got information from his folks on the ground, saying the fire is not big enough to elicit a federal response. He had already made up his mind that once verified, he didn't think, based off of the Twitter feeds that it was going to elicit a federal response. He had moved forward in the planning for what FEMA needed to do during the San Bernadino gas explosion before he ever got information from his traditional surveillance systems. And again, this isn't a perfect system yet but this is planting the seed of ok, so we have this tool now available which is, people are reporting on Twitter and Facebook all the time about events. How can we use that information to have better situational awareness. We will talk about that in a minute too. (00:23:26)

And finally, Recovery. I'm really excited about this. The office of Recovery just moved from the office of health that is in HHS over to us in ASPR. So we are now very actively engaged in recovery efforts. I'm actually down here in New Orleans working on the gulf oil spill recovery, still. And thinking about how we can use social media to enhance recovery. (00:23:48)

This is tough because recovery in general is pretty tough. You know, both preparedness and response tend to be, well preparedness is kind of a perpetual thing that we do and response is quick and fast and then it is over. Recovery is long and it is really different for every event and it changes all the time. So, a

challenge to us is to figure out how can social media help us with our recovery efforts. Well one thing that is consistently true across the board about recovery is that after any disaster people suffer from the mental health effects of those disasters. And that these, social media, social media, not new media in particular, gives us a great opportunity to build some mental health apps or mental health tools that connect people, that help them connect with one another. At least address the mental and behavioral health affects that we see with a lot of emergencies. (00:24:42)

Again, I think this is actually out of order. Pardon me. Okay, so great. But what does all this have to do with healthcare and hospital preparedness? So we've got all these tools, people are using them, there are all these apps, there is all this cool stuff. What are we going to do with it all and how are we going, as whatever realm you are, I'm in government, you might be in private industry, you might be a student, looks like we have a lot of public health people, emergency managers – what do we do with all this stuff? That's a really good question. (00:25:19)

One thing we can do is just start thinking differently. So I want to reiterate the point later but I'm going to say it now, that social media is *a* tool of communication, not *the* tool of communication. But I really encourage you to start thinking about, in whatever way you work in emergency preparedness or public health, how can social media bolster what I do? So, for instance, if you are responsible for, if you work in an operations center let's say, there are a multitude of opportunities for you to be engaging with social media. But there is so many opportunities that sometimes it is difficult to know where to start. (00:25:55)

This slide shows one way that we can think about it is, thinking about where our information is going to come from during our next emergency. So it is not just these big disasters where social media can be a benefit. It is also for things like health pandemics. I know there are a lot of CDC folks on the line who are actively engaged in surveillance on a day-to-day basis of all kinds of diseases. Well, one thing that we can turn to these days to know when a disease is starting to affect our populations is to be monitoring social media. So you see this, there is actually a new image out that is a little bit clearer than this. But basically what this slide is showing is that, what they are finding, and this was done by a group called HealthMmap, and they are an amazing organization. You should go check them out online after this presentation. Actually, I'm going to tell you right now, up in the right-hand corner of your screen, there is a little golden tablet. And that is Shared Notes. And in this Shared Notes I have placed a couple of things so far, the two above you can ignore for now and I will talk about them later. And I have just written in HealthMap because it is quite a cool tool that this slide actually was created off of. And you also might check out these folks called CrisisMappers who are similar to HealthMap (00:27:16)

But anyway, basically what HealthMap does is uses, much like Google flu did, social media to develop maps that help with early situational awareness of disease. Iff some of you are still feeling like this crying baby it's probably because you say, wow, this is really exciting, at least this is how I feel sometimes. There are all these cool things out there. But there are so many of them I don't even know where to start. And I know from previous presentations I have given, there are probably a few of you out in the audience saying, I'm too old for this. I'm so far behind. I don't have a Facebook page, I barely text, my phone doesn't even take pictures. And I say, before you start crying, know that it's ok. Even if you can't, even if you don't use Facebook yet, you don't know how to text, there is hope for you. I'm saying, yes you can! So, what am I trying to say here. I'm trying to say, everyone on this call is somewhere at a different level with their use of social media. It's going to be all over the map. There are going to be people like me who on a day-to-day basis are thinking this stuff and are actively engaged in the government doing this stuff. And then there are going to be a lot of folks out there who, you might be in charge of an operations center for space or for a company and you don't use social media at all. And you're trying to figure out how. (00:28:38)

So, the first thing I want to say is, start small. Everyone can do this. It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter how technically how un-savvy you are. You can do this. If what this means, if I had one success out of this whole webinar, I would want it to be, one of you out there goes out and engages in social media in a new way after this. So if that could mean, you go and join Facebook. And you know what? You can join Facebook as your dog. You can join Facebook as Bob Smith. If you don't want your personal information out there which I fully respect and appreciate, at least go on there, create an account, figure out how it works. Same thing with Twitter. Join Twitter, play around with it. You don't need to tweet, you don't need to do any of that stuff. But start getting used to what these tools are and what's

out there. A lot of you might be on LinkedIn. That's a whole different kind of social media that is actually designed specifically to link people professionally. And the reason this matters for us in public health preparedness is because we can now create networks pretty easily with people all across the state, the country and the world that do the same thing that we do. And why that matters is because there are a lot of people out there who are going to be way ahead of you in the use and implementation of this stuff that only have a lot to learn from one another. (00:29:55)

So you can not only use the social media in your actual job, implementing stuff in your EOC or implementing stuff in your company, we can also be using social media actually network with one another and learn from one another in our own community. So, if you don't have a Facebook account, go get one. If you do and you're way advanced in this stuff, I urge you to think about, what can you take away from some of the things we are talking about in your specific agency and say, where do I fit in, what are we not doing, what are some of the challenges that I am facing and how can I overcome them. So one of the big challenges that I know a lot of face is that we can't access things like Facebook in our offices. And I'm going to talk about an app challenge that I just launched in a little while and I'll explain what an app challenge is. But know that, you know that I can access Facebook at work but I then launched the challenge, develop a Facebook app. I had to do it at home but you know, use some time at home, set aside half an hour every day. Set aside half an hour a week. I don't care, whatever it is, start learning this stuff because I hate to be the bearer of bad new but this stuff is not going anywhere. It's only, the field of social media is expanding in itself and the use of social media in disaster preparedness is also expanding very, very quickly. The weather service, NOAA, FEMA, all of these agencies are starting to engage and we are all trying to figure out how to do that. (00:31:22)

So, back to you as the individual. I want to talk for a minute about Joplin and the tornado that went through Joplin. This gives me chills every time I think about this story. When we went down to Joplin just in the aftermath of the tornado, we went and interviewed, well we went and talked with, a bunch of, with the city manager and with the hospital CEOs to find out what had happened and where they were and what their remaining needs were. And I ran into a woman, I was very curious about how social media was used during this response and did they engage. I ran into a woman who worked in St. John Hospital and that's the hospital you see in the back that was completely destroyed during the tornado. And at the time they were missing, they had 1100 employees that were unaccounted for. And they had tried all of their traditional methods of communication to find them. They couldn't get through on phone lines, they were having trouble text messaging, for 1100 employees. So one of the higher-ups turned to this woman and said I want you to go use social media to try and locate these people. And she said to him, I don't even have a Facebook account, I don't know how to do this and he said, well go figure it out. So here's a woman who had never engaged in social media at all who is now responsible for tracking down 1100 unaccounted for employees. So what she did was she got a Facebook account that day and started networking with, and writing on the walls of, and friending any employees she could find from the hospital and eventually within, I think she said three days, had located all 1100 employees using Facebook. Here's a woman who never used social media before and who accomplished the goal of locating missing people and accounting for all 1100 of their missing employees. And that to me was just a sign that this is absolutely an amazing tool that can really, really help people in their times of need and if we think of it ahead of time and we don't try and do that stuff in the midst of a disaster, we've got a great opportunity to create some new and helpful tools. (00:33:36)

So here is my advice and words of encouragement. Again, you don't have to be an expert. Start small and think about where you are as an individual, think about where your company is whatever that company may be with its use of social media. Be creative. The coolest part about social media to me is that it is completely at the whims of the people, right? The public, the reason it's social media is that the public creates it, the public develops it, where it goes is up to the public. And all of us are part of that public and all of us are a part of developing the ways in which social media is used for good. Integrate social media into your day-to-day practices. Again, on an individual level and on an institutional level. So as an individual make sure that you are doing something every day to integrate it into your day-to-day practices. So what does that mean? Download a new mobile app. Go find something, think about your life and think about what you might need in an emergency and go find a mobile app and then start to use it. Figure out what you like about it, what you don't like about it. If you don't have a smart phone yet, know that probably by 2013 you will because it sounds like we are moving towards only having smart phones

available. If you don't have a smart phone, go and think about the way that Facebook is used. Go and think about the way Twitter is used. So one of the things I'm saying is think about the ways that these tools are used already. (00:34:59)

So, one of the things that I think we in government have a really hard time with is that social media isn't something that can be controlled. So, I like to think about, here's another way to think about the realms of social media. There are users of social media and there's ways to leverage social media. So right now when I get on my Facbeook page I'm a user of that social media. I'm using it in the way that it was designed for. We can also think about people's behavior on a day to day basis. So, I was home, I was really like this story, I was home here in New Orleans a few months ago, talking to my fourteen year old cousin and I said, you have, you know, giving him a hard time about having a girl friend and I said, well do you talk to her on the phone? He said, talk to her on the phone, what do you mean? He said, that's rude. Well what do you mean it's rude? He said, well I have to text her first, I can't just call her. And I said, oh my gosh, we are turning to an era of folks who rely a totally new form of communication and what we need to be thinking about is how do people function on a day-to-day basis already and then how can we use the way in which they function to leverage that behavior. Instead of trying to control their behavior, let's look at the ways that they already behave and the ways that we can then leverage that behavior to increase preparedness and to do response better. (00:36:20)

Think positive. You start go get overwhelmed. You think you can't do this. You can't think I'm too old. Erase those thoughts from your memory and know you can. Learn from others. Again there are - Right now you know we are developing best practices but this is a really new field. There isn't a right or a wrong way to do this. There's not a lot of information out there about what's really effective and what is ineffective but there are a lot of other people out there doing jobs like yours. And now we've got these great tools of social media to help you find them and then to talk about ways in which that we can work together. (00:36:51)

Finally, please utilize the next generation. If you look at these kids on the right-hand side of the screen, people using social media today are kids of the generation that are up and coming in high school and middle school right now. The same way, they know how to use it like we knew how to use a toaster oven. I mean this is just second nature to them. So, one of the things Dr. Lurie and I are doing are trying to incorporate young people into our SOCs during our next emergency. Not because they're going to create some amazing tool that we can use to enhance that response, but they're going to be thinking about the use of social media in a whole different way than I am even. I didn't grow up, I still had card catalogues when I was during research as a college student. But these kids don't even know what a card catalogue is. So we need to be getting our young folks in to talk about this all the time because especially in those top leadership positions, oftentimes when we're in the midst real serious preparedness and planning or when we are in the midst of a response there aren't a lot of young folks around who have all of these great ideas. There are a bunch of academic centers who have really great technology institutes, so MIT is one. Let's get some interns into our EOCs, let's get some interns into whatever you may, into your hospital, whatever you do, just to be brainstorming and thinking about, you don't have to do this, right? We can get the young folks in here who know how to use this stuff to help you think about the ways that you might use social media to bolster whatever you're trying to do. (00:38:19)

A few miscellaneous thoughts. Think about electronic health records. This is another lesson we learned from Joplin. They had implemented electronic health records one week before the tornado and thanks to that they had continuity of care of almost all of their patients. They were able to get Methadone patients on Methadone within 24 hours of the emergency. This is all thanks to electronic health records. (00:38:45)

What does this have to do with us? Well, it has a lot to do with us, because there is a new initiative out by the Obama administration to be creative with our use of technology; to be pushing the envelope; to be innovators. So Todd Park and HHS is doing a lot of IT challenges, which I am going to talk to you about in a minute, to take health information and health data and get people to be creating tools that help us and help the public that better utilize that information. So if you think about this, we have all kinds of data about disasters. About people in disasters. About our response patterns. About all kinds of stuff. There are all kinds of amazing developers out there who are so excited about taking that data and making it visual for us, making tools that we can use on a day-to-day basis. We don't need to create these tools, there are people out there who will do it for us. (00:39:41)

Social Media and private industry. One thing we need to do in public health and disaster preparedness is get our needs out there into private industries. So people want to create stuff, right? They are trying to pass it off as a creation of new social media tools. So what this means is, if we don't somehow communicate, for instance, one big issue right now, with the use of social media for early situational awareness is validity of data. How do we know this data is valid. So for instance, if you are searching Twitter feeds during the beginning of an outbreak, you might be getting a lot of hits that say things like "flu." But, what we don't know right now, is, if I have a thousand hits of the word "flu," we don't know how to contextualize that word, in the sentence, to know if someone is saying, " I feel horrible, I think I've got the flu," or "Thank goodness I haven't caught the flu," or "Make sure you get vaccinated against the flu." Right? So those are a bunch of different…the significance of the word flu can have a lot of meanings and we need to figure out, in order to successfully use Twitter for something like situational awareness, we need to be able to figure out what kind of context is it being used in? Well, what does that have to do with private industry? There are all kinds of people out there who want to create that tool. They want to create the tool that allows you to contextualize that word so we can actually be using those Twitter feeds in a way that doesn't require someone to go read all thousand text messages…or Twitter feeds to know what the context is of those words. So the only way that they're going to create these things is if we push out the need for something like that to be created. So if you identify a need, we need to find ways to be working with the development communities to let them know what our needs are in public health and disaster preparedness. (00:41:31)

The next miscellaneous slide. Social media is the ugly headed stepchild. What I mean by that is nobody knows what to do with this. Nobody knows where it should be housed. It is in a lot of people's communications departments. But I'm here to encourage you that social media belongs everywhere. And that it doesn't help you in preparedness or response or recovery if the only people who know how to use social media are in your communications branch. Integrate social media into all of your offices. Your budget people, get them thinking about social media. Everyone should be…encourage your employees to take, you know, 10 minutes a day and think about…go research how social media is used in whatever field or part of your office they are in. This is really important because social media is a communication tool, but it is a communication tool for everybody. And if only your communications folks know how to use it, it's really not benefitting you in the ways that it could. So I encourage you to make social media a part of, sort of your, strategic plan. Get it in there, get it in there as an objective that everyone is actively in engaging in learning how to use social media the minimum. And to reiterate, social media is a tool for communication, but not the tool for communication. So one thing I realized really early on when I was in sort of a heated debate about whether or not social media belongs in government and disaster preparedness, was that the person that I was talking to was understanding me to be saying that social media should replace our surveillance systems. And when I finally…it took me literally months to recognize the fact that he thought I meant we should be using Twitter feeds instead of our surveillance system, and that's not what I'm saying, I'm saying, we should be using Twitter feeds to bolster our existing surveillance system, or we should be using Facebook to bolster our communications plans. So think about social media as a new tool to add to that toolbox of things we already use for preparedness response and recovery. Not to replace anything, but to bolster what we already do. (00:43:38)

These were just some last…the last bullets on here were some suggestions for places that you can actively engage in social media within your…whatever kind of role you have in your workplace. Working groups are great places to talk about social media. So I put hospital working groups here because I have been talking to a lot of hospital coalitions. And the great thing about that is that then when they meet, in their coalitions, they can share the ways that they are using social media with one another, but without kind of getting that out there in the working group as an objective, those conversations aren't happening, and one of the most satisfying things for me about talking to these hospital associations is that now the conversation is happening amongst them without me needing to facilitate it. If you work in a coalition, if you work in a union, if you work in any kind of organization where you can be adding this to…for instance, on our response policy calls, now we're trying to integrate social media as one of the topics that we always talk about. How can we use social media to better enhance the response at the time? (00:44:45)

So there are a lot of challenges that are still out there. I am definitely going to leave this talk, hopefully, with a taste in your mouth that I think social media is amazing. It's this fantastic tool. It has a world of opportunity. It is only the beginning. But also recognize there are big, big challenges to using social

media. So one I touched on already, which is signal versus noise. How do we know what are true signals that are coming in, and we were talking about the influx of information, and what is just noise? So if people are, what if a new song comes out on the radio, it's called *The Eggshell Flu*. It's a totally a meaningless phrase, but people are Twittering about it all the time. At this point, that is noise. That's another signal, but if enough people Twittered about it, and we were just monitoring the word flu, we're going to be wasting a lot of our time looking at messaging about some new song. (00:45:44)

Reliability and validity of data. Same kind of issue. We need to be pushing the development community to help us figure out how to verify data; how to make it more reliable. You don't have to do that. That is one of my messages here. We just need to be collaborating with people who know how to help us do these things. So a good example, is we would really like to be, right now, our watch officers and SOC monitor Twitter, but it's really, again, it's literally going through Twitter messages and reading every message. If we could get an app or a program that would do that for us, it would cut out on the amount of time and energy it takes to use social media in an effective way in our SOC. So just thinking about those things, knowing you don't have to come up with all of the solutions, you just have to identify the problems. Who should monitor social media? Great question. I have no idea. My guess is, you know, one of the, I think, exciting and cool things about social media right now is it is highly unregulated. Which means people can kind of use it in whatever way and however they want. Now that's got, you know, benefits and downfalls. For instance, there is now this new bullying cyberbullying, that kids are going through that is really, really awful and affecting a lot of kids. So you know, social media is not always good. Should we have monitoring of it, if so who should do that? Should the government even be engaged in the monitoring social media is another question? Some people say yes, some people say no. The impact on costs and outcomes. So it's hard to know how…We don't have great measures for the use of social media right now. So yeah, [indiscernible] was amazing during the Haiti earthquake, and a great story, great news story. But, it's not really a measurable…we don't know how much it really contributed to our response, in making it better. So one of the things we definitely need to focus on as we develop tools: How are we going to monitor their effectiveness, and then how are we going to disseminate that information. And finally, our…all of our favorite topic right now: funding. As we know, there are funding cuts all over the place. People often come to say to me "Oh, this is great. But you know, I can't afford to hire someone to put on my SOC. I can't afford to go out and develop this app that I know would help us." Well, I am here to certainly solve that problem for you. Again, I really encourage you; there are all kinds of people out there who just want to engage. And I'll tell you one thing, disaster preparedness is an area that people are really, really excited about in this realm. We have had an overwhelming interest in the challenge that I am about to tell you about. And that funding is one thing that you really don't have to worry about. I am going to talk about things called hackathons and challenges in a moment, and address your funding issues, but other things, like get some interns in there, get people in there who think about social media already—into your organization for free. You don't have to pay them. People want to come in and do this. We have people dying to come into our SOC during the next emergency and think about ways that they can enhance our response by using social media. Questions for you; things for you to thing about and talk amongst your colleagues and to talk amongst your networks. How are you currently using social media? Is it working, is it not working? How would you like to be integrating social media into your organization in the future? And what are your challenges and questions about how to do that? What are your biggest challenges for implementing social media, and how can we help? So, how can we, meaning we the people who think social media is an awesome tool for bolstering preparedness and response in this country, but how can you help each other, how can we be developing best practices, sharing measures in metrics? How can, for instance, if the State of Virginia is doing a great job with the implementation of social media, how can we make sure that that conversation and that information from Virginia is getting to Georgia, or is getting to California, or on a county level, if there are counties who are engaging in this stuff and they are successful, and then there are other counties who aren't doing it at all—We just need to make sure that we are helping one another and that we aren't rebuilding the wheel over and over and over. (00:49:59)

Finally, this is one of my most favorite topics, only because a lot of people don't know about this stuff. So, you're thinking, Okay, I've got this great idea for a disaster preparedness app that would really help my, um, the nation be more prepared, but it's going to cost a fortune to have this thing developed. Well, I am here to tell you, there is a phenomenon out there that is one of the coolest things that I have ever experienced. And those are things called hackathons. I don't know how many of you saw the "Facebook"

movie, and there was that scene where they are pounding beers and hammering away at computers, and then there's some group that wins. Well, that's a hackathon. And it doesn't require pounding of beers and being wild and crazy, but they have them all over the country and they are amazing. So what a hackathon is is a group of people—I've been to a number of them now, and I'll just give you an example, actually, there was one at Georgetown in D.C. a couple of months ago, Georgetown put it on, all they supply is pizza and soda. So you buy ten pizzas and a couple cases of soda, you put out a notification that says "We're having a hackathon on August 31st, at 6:00 p.m." And all of these people show up. Developers show up, doctors show up, psychologists show up. Any and everyone you can think of show up to these things. The first ten minutes are people who have come with problems. So I might go and say, "I work in my EOC, and I want to develop an app that helps us better use Twitter in the EOC." That can be the problem. Some of the neater problems that I heard proposed at some of the hackathons I went to, one guy came, he had a heart monitor, and the company told him that the data from his heart monitor was proprietary information and they wouldn't give him his own data. So he brought this thing to the hackathon and said "Can someone please help me make a mobile app that will allow me to visualize the data of my own heart?" Another one was a guy said, "Man, I have been dieting for five years and trying to exercise and I am not losing weight and I am terrible at monitoring my own behavior, can someone help me make a mobile app that is built like a game?" So, he said, "I'm a really competitive person and I know if it was like a game, I would do much better." So it's all kinds of stuff. People just get up and they put their problems out there, and then, you break off into groups, there are all kinds of people. There are programmers, there are, I'm technically a philosopher, there are philosophers, there are public health people, you don't have to know how to program to go to one of these things, to contribute to the project. You break off into groups, you brainstorm, by the end of the day, everyone presents their solution. And there were some really amazing things that go on. And this is for ten boxes of pizza, right? So at the end of the day, what you thought was going to cost you $125,000 comes out of these things for free. (00:53:01)

Google them. They happen all over the place, they are really awesome. The second and last thing I want to talk about are challenges. Challenges are very much like hackathons, they are just longer term. So, you put out a question to the developing community, and you give them, you launch a challenge, let's say we launch a challenge today, we give them three months, at the end of the three months, all of the things that…all of…let's say you wanted to develop a mobile app. At the end of the three months, you have all of these submissions for mobile apps and then you get to choose the winner from all of those. So, we're doing one of these right now. We just launched our first challenge. And so those of you in the federal government, the Obama Administration just announced something called the America Competes Act, which gives federal agencies the authority to fund, to pay for challenges. So what you, what we were going to develop, which is…I will tell you about as my closing remarks…is a disaster preparedness Facebook application. My new boss said, "Go, let's do a social media project with ASPR." I'm going to give, she gave me sort of full realm of what that would be. I wanted to start with a very tangible, simple project, which was a Facebook application. And it turned out that even to have one of our contractors develop something like this, it was going to cost over $100,000. I'm thinking if only 100 Facebook users end up using this app, it's really not worth the taxpayers dollar. So what we did instead was we launched a challenge. And so now, $10,000, which is our first prize cash award, we're going to have a number of people submitting proposals, and the day that our challenge launched, thankfully, a benefit that came out of the earthquake, we launched our challenge when the earthquake happened, and all of the sudden, people recognized the need and value of an app like this. So, what you need to know for hackathons and challenges, you need to identify you problem. So our problem was people are starting to use Facebook more and more to search for their loved ones and to connect with people, but there is no real good process for people doing that other than in the height of emergencies, you know, if I can't find you, so let's say, you're this guy, you're Ken. I know Ken was in New Orleans and a hurricane just hit it. I want to find Ken. I'm trying to call him, his line is busy, his mom, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, friends are all trying to call him. Nobody can get a hold of Ken, the communication systems are overwhelmed. What do we do? Well, these days, people are starting to go to Facebook and try to identify information. So we decided was, let's take that behavior that people are already exhibiting, which is the use of Facebook to not only identify where friends are, but we can use this to help people be better prepared on the front end. So, our challenge is, create a Facebook application that links you with three people who are your quote unquote lifelines, that these people will agree to help you in an emergency, the app should give you the option to

make a plan, so ready.gov, an abbreviated version of that plan, and then to try to send that plan to your lifelines without retaining any of that information in any kind of a database. And then, help you get other people to use the app. So, that's our challenge. We launched it last week. Here's the basic premise. You identify your three people, those three people agree to be your lifeline, your lifelines are then somehow on Facebook, indicated on your Facebook page. So if these three people are my lifelines, why does this matter? Because now, if I go to your page, and you have identified your lifelines on your page, I know that there are three people who are already looking for you. So one of the responsibilities of a lifeline is to be posting consistent information on your Facebook wall. So you're missing, and I'm your lifeline. I have agreed that I will go, say twice a day and post something. Even if it's "I don't know where Ken is, but we're looking for him. Please don't try and call him." What does that help do? Not only does it help sort of ease people's concerns about where Ken is, it also is helping decompress our communications system, also providing a platform for people to talk about their feelings of anxiety about him being missing, or if what I post is "We found Ken, he's okay, please don't call him, but know that he is alright and he'll be in touch soon." So that's our challenge. There are organizations that will do these challenges for you. So we are working through an organization called Health 2.0, and that's that bottom link, health2challenge.org. Also found on challenge.gov, these challenges are being launched all over HHS, you can see all of the challenges at challenge.gov. A lot of this has to do with taking data and creating social media or apps that help the public visualize that data in some meaningful way. And I'm going to leave you with two last things, which is if you look up in your golden tablet shared notes, there are links to two apps. One is called Asthmopolis, and the other is called the San Ramon Fire app. And I encourage you after this talk is over, just go watch these videos, these are the promotional videos for these apps. These are some really amazing, the Asthmopolis, you can imagine how this could really bolster our preparedness in this country, of folks who are asthma sufferers from preventing asthma, and the other one if a really amazing CPR app that the San Ramon Fire Department has put together. So I am going to close with that, and thank you, thank you, for being on this call. Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions. With, you want to know, you as an individual, how can I get involved, how can I get my agency involved? How as an individual? Where should I go from here? I would love to help you out with that. I would love to talk more about any of this stuff. I wish that there was an audio forum where we could have a discussion now, but it is a little bit difficult on these webinars, so again, thanks so much for joining me, and I hope you took something out of this presentation, and I certainly hope one of you is going to go do something different tomorrow with your use of social media, or today. So thanks a lot. (00:59:32)

Susan Dugan

Thank you. Thanks so much. This is Susan Dugan. And actually, we do have time for question and answer. We will be alternating between the written questions presented to the webinar forum, as well as alternating with our audio operator taking calls from the audience. And some of the questions that I see already are "Will this presentation be archived?" and it will be. It will be on emergency.cdc.gov/CERC, which stands for the Crisis Emergency Risk Communication. So we will be having that there. Stacy can provide those other apps links to us, we will have those there as well. And, Stacy, if you would also, I don't know what kind of contact information you want to provide. (01:00:23)

Stacy Elmer

Why, yeah, please, feel free to post my e-mail address. My HHS email address would be great.

Susan Dugan

Okay, we will do that.

Stacy Elmer

Which for those of you who are still here, it is stacy.elmer@hhs.gov.

Susan Dugan

And if we'd like to go ahead with the question and answer time.

Stacy Elmer

That sounds great. (01:00:47)

Operator

If you'd like to ask an audio question, please press star one and record your name. One moment for the first question.

Susan Dugan

And again, we will be alternating these between the written questions from the webinar and the audio from the audio operator.

Stacy Elmer

Great.

Operator

We show no audio questions at this time.

Susan Dugan

Jody, do you have some from the webinar?

Jody Pierce

I do. Let me see here. Barbara wants to know, what is the difference between using metadata and geo-tagging?

Stacy Elmer

Great question. So, metadata is a large, large set of information that is embedded in a photograph. The geolocation is part of that metadata. So the other things that are embedded in metadata are dates, time that the photograph was taken, and a lot of other stuff that is kind of irrelevant to the average person, but is relevant to someone like an archivist. So it is also relevant to someone like us if someone knows a lot about photographic metadata, that information can be used. You know, if you wanted to, here's a great example: Microsoft has released this amazing program that takes photos from let's say 2 million people have taken a photograph of Mt. Rushmore. This program can take all of those 2 million photographs and create a panorama of Mt. Rushmore out of those photographs. Why that matters, well, you can imagine a disaster, if you could take all of the photographs that were taken in the same, let's say ten minute time frame, and create a panorama of what that meant…what those ten minutes looked like in one image, and then do that over the course of twelve hours, you would have, essentially a moving look at a disaster based off of photographs. So metadata, there's all kinds of other aspects to metadata and geotagging is just one of them. (01:03:06)

Jody Pierce

Thank you. We have another question. In what way can the average healthcare institution monitor or receive the flow of the social media communications from the masses so that we could follow this input and trends and therefore timely and appropriately react to a given situation or event? (01:03:26)

Stacy Elmer

That is a fantastic question. And a question I think about every day. You know, on a very high level, we have problems right, already with disseminating and communicating amongst, let's say from federal to state to local to county governments already. But on top of that, we don't really know yet, we are still figuring out, not government, but I think just the development community in general; what kinds of tools we can use and what are effective. So I think a big challenge for us is to—as people are engaging in this stuff—making sure that we're communicating and that there are actually forums for that communication. I know for instance, that even in the federal government, there are a number of agencies creating disaster preparedness apps and we're also learning about the work that the others are doing. So I actually have to

applaud Susan Dugan on the call here from CDC, because even between ASPR and CDC, we weren't communicating for a while about…we just hadn't made the connection. So again, that's one of the reasons in my presentation, I really encourage you to make social media a topic of conversation for a lot of those regular meetings that we have. So if you are in a state health department and you participate in NASSO, make social media a topic of conversation at those NASSO meetings. If you are even meeting within your own agency, making sure, for instance, that you know what different offices within your agency are doing in terms of social media, we are kind of doing that in HHS right now and it is really difficult. And I think that is a great question. Especially with regards with not only is there communications aspects, but there is also the what tools should we be using, and the answer is I don't know yet. I don't know that anybody knows yet. There are certainly things being developed right now. I think they will be improved upon and expanded upon to a point where it becomes sort of kind of like Facebook was the reigning champion of social networking tools there for a while, and there was, and well, there still is things like Myspace, Friendster, and all of these other things, and Facebook reigned supreme because of usability, really. So one of the cool things about social media tools is that it is more user friendly, and the more effective tools will come out on top simply because there will be more people using them because they are easier to use. But right now, we really have a great challenge. Both what are the right tools and then how do we communicate about those tools within our agencies. I certainly welcome any suggestions people have about those. (01:05:58)

Jody Pierce

Thank you. Operator, are there any questions on the phone lines?

Operator

We show no audio questions.

Jody Pierce

Okay, another one from the chat line. What kind of issues do hackathons present for the federal government? I have thought of holding one; however, I have assumed the compliance clearance and privacy issues would be too difficult to overcome. (01:06:20)

Stacy Elmer

You may be right. I don't know the answer to that question, but I can tell you academic institutions are great places to partner with to actually hold them for you. But I don't think that they are impossible, because actually I just met a gentleman at the Health Informatics Conference from the state of Washington who was chomping at the bit, he's from state government, to hold a hackathon. So, I can find that information out for you, actually, if you want to shoot me an e-mail. Todd Parks office in HHS would probably have the answer to that question, but my guess is that it is not as hard as you think. And if it is as hard as you think, I have been to hackathons put on by Google, put on by Microsoft, and put on by Geogetown, various outside entities really like doing these things. So perhaps a partnership makes it even easier for you. (01:07:11)

Jody Pierce

Great. Thank you. From David, he wants you to know that he thinks the presentation has been awesome. He has a question, what is the evidence-base like for use of social media?

Stacy Elmer

Great question. Not very good. It's getting better. If you Google right now, the Red Cross just came out with a great survey about the use of social media, more and more agencies and offices who take this stuff really seriously are being as serious about the measures and metrics. For instance, we are with our challenge, we are going to have measures and metrics both for the effectiveness of the challenge itself and then the effectiveness of the app itself. But, I think it's a really great questions, because obviously, there are a million, for instance, response apps out there, but no way to compare them right now in terms of evidence-base for is this actually helping in a response or is it hindering our response? So again, measures and metrics are behind in this realm, because people's behavior is really hard to monitor in this

capacity. Great challenge, and certainly something that we are working on, but I think that the short answer is that if you are developing these things or if you are engaging in these things, that we have to be thinking about measures and metrics from the start. So the minute that we engage in any kind of use of social media we need to be at the forefront of that conversation is how are we going to develop an evidence-base from the beginning about the effectiveness of the tools we are using? (01:08:50)

Jody Pierce

The next question is from Roger. When starting up Facebook and/or Twitter, what is the best way to get the word out that my organization is using this technology? In other words, how do I build my viewership? (01:09:03)

Stacy Elmer

Great question. I will be completely honest, and say I don't tweet. I don't think anyone wants to know what I am doing all the time. But I do think that it is great, that agencies are starting to tweet because it is a powerful tool for getting information out there. And I think really the best way is to use it a lot. And to make sure that you are posting relevant information for your current audience. This stuff, as you know, a lot of times quote goes viral. Which means it's really, and Facebook, I've had great conversations with Facebook about this. They don't have a very good sense for what's going to be popular and what's not. Social media is all user driven by the public, they just don't have good ways of predicting whether an app is going to be a success. So for instance, they never intended to have games on Facebook, until, I don't know if any of you have heard of Farmville, so Farmville is just a game where you can build a farm and you can help other people build a farm. You can grow virtual plants, and you can water your neighbor's plants, and for some reason, this thing just took off and everybody loved it. So if you want to get your message out, I encourage you to just keep at it. Use it a lot. Use Twitter, use Facebook, and then link the two. You can now link Twitter and Facebook together and all these other kinds of social media are more and more often being able to be linked. Keep using it, keep it relevant. Keep your sort of hops and popping messages, that you are pushing out. What are you trying, what audience are you aiming for? And what kinds of messages are relevant for these audiences? And the way this stuff works really is that you know, if I'm using a great Facebook page, I share it with my friends on Facebook, or I shoot them a text that says "Check this out, this is really cool." And again, if you're in disaster preparedness, immediately after disasters is a great time to push this stuff. I hate to say that, but you know, that's the time that we as Americans are thinking about our own personal preparedness and about what we should be doing. So using those times to help people get engaged is also a recommendation I have. (01:11:17)

Jody Pierce

Okay, Operator, do you show any questions on the phone lines?

Operator

No questions at this time.

Jody Pierce

Okay, well, we have more from the chat line. Steve has a two-part question. Is that CDC lifeline page active now? And the second question is, what can you say about Twitter aggregators? Are there any that can service in preparedness and response, in PH preparedness and response? (01:11:46)

Stacy Elmer

We, like when app challenge launched last week, you can find it on either challenge.gov or health2challenge.org. It will run for three months. So basically there are kind of two stages. The first stage is that you put out the challenge itself. And one of the things I didn't say about challenges that I think is really important is it's a great way to communicate with the public about a problem that we think is important. So ASPR thought that this problem about networking people prior to disasters and making sure you have an emergency plan was an important one, we put that problem out into the public by launching a challenge and saying solve our problem, this is an important problem to us. With that said, our challenge will run for three months and then we'll pick a winner a couple of weeks later, we'll actually

launch the app on Facebook and we'll do another kind of media push when that app launches. Your second question, we are currently in the process of sort of sifting through and vetting those types of tools. We don't have one right now that we are using. But out fusion center is actively looking on collaborating with folks and trying to find that tool. Again, I think it's a new problem, as EOCs and all kinds of operations centers are really actively engaging with social media now, I imagine it won't be long until a good tool comes out, but at this time I don't have any suggestions for tools out there. Although as soon as I do I would be happy to share them. (01:13:21)

Jody Pierce

Thank you. This is a follow-up question from David. It says I am currently doing a research project on how social media is changing the ways in which risk information is communicated during an emergency. My current feeling is that social media is creating a great way to promote mobility and engage before the [indiscernible] wasn't possible with traditional media. Do you have any [Indiscernible - poor audio]. (01:13:46)

Stacy Elmer

Okay, could you repeat that end of the question? I lost you.

Jody Pierce

Sure. He said that my current feeling is that social media is a great way to promote credibility and engage before the incident, which wasn't possible with traditional media. And he wanted to know your thoughts on that. (01:14:01)

Stacy Elmer

I think that's right. One of the really cool things about social media is what they call self correcting. So you know, if you post something false on Twitter or on Facebook, pretty quickly, your network of people are going to correct you. So I think it actually is great for both preparedness and response. I just sit and listen a lot of times, for instance, after this recent earthquake, thankfully, we didn't have any casualties or injuries from that. So it was a great time to listen to people about what they did. And you know, not many people thought there was going to be an earthquake in D.C. But a lot of, lot of people got information about it via social networks. So a friend of mine who lives in D.C. was out of town and he said all of the sudden, you've got a news feed on Facebook that essentially posted everybody's statuses, and that his newsfeed just started blowing up with "Earthquake." And he said that was what…that was the way that he learned about the earthquake in D.C. and he went then to verify that information using traditional media. But I think you're absolutely right, it's how people are getting information and that self-correcting part of that is great. It doesn't always self-correct, but in general, it's pretty hard to push out false information out on social media. (01:15:21)

Jody Pierce

Thank you again, Stacy. Those are all the questions from the chat line. Operator, are there any on the phones? (01:15:29)

Operator

We show no questions at this time.

Jody Pierce

Okay.

Susan Dugan

Thank you all so much for taking the time to join us today. Again, this will be posted on emergency.cdc.gov/CERC. Stacy, as always, thank you so much for your time, your information. And we look forward to another time in the near future.

Stacy Elmer

That sounds great. I'm happy we're continuing this collaboration. I just wanted to say thanks everybody for joining and if you have…a lot of times this stuff germinates and you have questions a couple days from now, please, please e-mail me. And if you want to also shoot me ideas for collaborations amongst the group that was on this call, I would be very interested to hear your ideas.

Susan Dugan

Great. Thanks so much. And with that, we again thank you all for joining us, and have a great afternoon. Goodbye.

Operator

Thank you. Today's conference has ended. All participants may disconnect at this time. (01:16:33)