

# Social media can help alert students during campus emergencies, study finds

February 18 2015, by Matthew Biddle

---



Using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to spread information during campus emergencies can help keep students safer, according to new research from the University at Buffalo School of Management.

The study, published in the *International Journal of Business Information Systems*, found the widespread popularity of social media and associated mobile apps enables campus authorities to instantly reach a large percentage of [students](#) to provide timely and accurate information during

crisis situations.

"Research suggests that students are more likely to comply with emergency notifications received through social networking channels," says lead author Wencui Han, a PhD student in the School of Management. "Social media also allows two-way communication. Campus officials can respond to concerns and provide more detailed instructions, and users can add and share content, helping information spread more rapidly."

The authors also note the most popular social media sites are free to use, making it cost effective for universities to build pages and monitor activity across multiple social channels.

"Interacting with students on social media imposes a cost in terms of devoting critical manpower, but if universities develop strategies for managing various social platforms for different types of incidents, they can better prepare students during emergencies," says co-author Raj Sharman, PhD, associate professor of management science and systems in the School of Management. "For example, Twitter is appropriate for updating real-time information, while Facebook is effective for wide notification because of its massive user base, especially among students."

A high-res downloadable photo of Sharman is available here:

<http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2015/02/028.html>.

The researchers surveyed high-level campus safety managers from 183 universities that do not yet have social networking accounts in place for emergency situations such as criminal incidents, natural disasters or health-related crises. They found that campuses with higher incident rates used a greater number of traditional notification channels—including television, radio, alarms, and email and text message alerts—and were more likely to consider adopting [social-](#)

[networking](#) services for emergency-notification purposes.

Social media does have limitations, however. The researchers caution that other users may post misleading information, or students may not subscribe to certain channels. As such, they recommend universities continue to deploy traditional methods as their primary notification system and use [social media](#) to provide supplemental information.

"Using a wide range of notification technologies can help keep students safer during a crisis," says Han. "Social media is especially useful to confirm [information](#) students received through other channels, provide additional updates and respond to student feedback."

Provided by University at Buffalo

Citation: Social media can help alert students during campus emergencies, study finds (2015, February 18) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-02-social-media-students-campus-emergencies.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.