

Tweeting in an emergency

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Social media has become a useful tool for the rapid dissemination of information. Writing in the *International Journal of Emergency Management*, a UK team describes their investigations into whether or not the likes of Twitter can be integrated effectively into emergency management.

Sophie Parsons and Mark Weal of the Web and Internet Science Group, at the University of Southampton, Nathaniel O'Grady of the Humanitarian Conflict Response Institute, at the University of Manchester, and Peter Atkinson of the University of Lancaster explain that at the moment integration remains ambiguous. The team has used the winter floods of 2013-2014 as a [case study](#) to reveal the pros and cons of [social media](#) in this context.

The team found that [emergency](#) responders were wont to post cautions and advice during an emergency. However, it seems from their results that information about structures and utilities affected by any given incident would be most likely to engage and be of use to the public. Moreover, the team found that responders do perceive social media as a useful tool for them to effectively deliver information to the public. However, while that might be the case, responders did not appear to fully exploit it in the emergency studied.

The team concedes that before they can say whether or not social media is an effective tool for [emergency management](#), there remain several questions about how it might fulfill a useful role for emergency responders and the public that rely on them during an incident. Uppermost among those questions are: Who are the responders' followers on social media? Are the responders actually reaching the public in [emergency situations](#)? Do the public find the responders' social media activity useful in an emergency? What do the [emergency](#)

[responders](#) actually gain by having a social media presence? If future research can answer these questions then we might be in a position to make the most of social media in the event of an emergency.

More information: Sophie Parsons et al. Social media in emergency management: exploring Twitter use by emergency responders in the UK, *International Journal of Emergency Management* (2019). [DOI: 10.1504/IJEM.2018.097360](#)

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