

# **Social Networking in 9-1-1 PSAPs Information Document**



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NENA recognizes the following industry experts and their companies for their contributions in development of this document.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	OPERATIONS IMPACTS SUMMARY.....	6
2.2	TECHNICAL IMPACTS SUMMARY.....	6
2.3	SECURITY IMPACTS SUMMARY .....	7
2.4	DOCUMENT TERMINOLOGY .....	7
2.5	REASON FOR ISSUE/REISSUE.....	7
2.6	RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK .....	7
2.7	DATE COMPLIANCE .....	8
2.8	ANTICIPATED TIMELINE.....	8
2.9	COSTS FACTORS .....	8
2.10	COST RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS.....	9
2.11	ADDITIONAL IMPACTS (NON COST RELATED).....	9
2.12	INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS POLICY.....	9
2.13	ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS .....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>SOCIAL NETWORKING IN PSAPS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1	HUMAN RESOURCES .....	12
3.2	PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PSAP TRAINING .....	13
3.3	PSAP OPERATIONS.....	14
3.4	CONTINGENCY PLANNING.....	16
<b>4</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED READING AND REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>EXHIBITS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>PREVIOUS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>18</b>

## 1 Executive Overview

The abundant availability of Internet access and increasing development of websites and smart phone applications available to the public that allow individuals to quickly communicate information about themselves in a digital world has transformed how society communicates. These technologies, defined as part of Web 2.0 (includes Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites and widgets), have created methods of communicating that are quickly becoming a primary method of communicating between individuals, especially in specific demographics such as teenagers. Social networking is quickly becoming the predominant method of keeping individuals informed about a variety of current events on both a personal level as well as events in global community. The popularity of social networking applications has been facilitated by the offering of numerous free or low-cost applications and the mobility provided to consumers through smart phones. This has created a phenomenon where the public may be made aware of a public safety incident prior to the first 9-1-1 call being received at the PSAP to report the emergency.

Social networking provides individuals with an efficient platform for communicating with large numbers of people expeditiously. Similarly, a PSAP may find information to post that will reduce incoming inquiry phone calls. Posting information such as accidents blocking a roadway; events that spur media interest and other real time information allows users to refer to the social networking site instead of calling into the PSAP. Some forms of social networking also allow for location specific information to be broadcast, commonly known as “checking in”.

Critical incidents, such as college campus shootings and natural disasters, have demonstrated that public service entities must adapt to this technology and incorporate social networking into their operations. In addition, postings by individuals requesting police, fire or EMS assistance have grown in frequency necessitating the implementation of policies to guide PSAP usage in monitoring social media. Each PSAP must also include policies on how to effectively respond to second hand requests for assistance that are prompted by postings on social networks.

PSAPs must review all “Terms” that are posted by social networking sites. PSAPs should be aware of what information, photos and videos are retained by the social networking site owners. Some social networking sites claim property rights to all media once posted. Each PSAP should develop a policy outlining what is acceptable material that can be posted to a social networking site, but on an agency’s official social sites as well as employees’ sites to ensure that critical public safety information is not inappropriately released through social media.

When considering social media policies, procedures and/or guidelines, PSAPs should ensure that their policies are not in conflict with any current local, county, state and/or federal statutes or requirements. PSAPs should consult with agency legal team or solicitor before launching a social networking site.

## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Operations Impacts Summary**

Each PSAP will need to determine the effectiveness of utilizing social networking in order to provide services to their communities. Social networking is becoming an increasingly important means of providing information from the PSAP to the community through public education programs, agency press releases and employment postings. While these functions are not mission critical and do not require 24-hour monitoring, a PSAP may need to hire and/or assign personnel to oversee social media. Staffing should be a consideration when determining how to utilize social networking in a PSAP. Clearly defined policies and procedures will need to be identified and ongoing training conducted for those employees assigned to post on behalf of the agency. PSAPs should determine if the site will be set up to allow for public comments or for one way communication. Additionally, personnel should be familiar with privacy and security policies of the social media websites utilized by the agency prior to implementation. Social networking sites will provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to subpoena information.

Any PSAP that receives requests for emergency assistance on a 24-hour basis from the public via the PSAP's social networking sources will need to implement operational policies and procedures to appropriately handle such requests to ensure that they are handled expeditiously. Information should be posted prominently on the site to indicate when and if it will be monitored by PSAP personnel so anyone accessing the site knows when to expect a response if it is unlikely that it is monitored 24/7/365.

PSAPs should also post specific information on social networking sites advising the public that it should not be used for immediate emergency response from the PSAP. Delays and outages may occur and the PSAP may not receive the information. Appropriate phone numbers should be posted on the site as an alternative means to contact the PSAP if immediate assistance is needed. PSAPs must consider any legal implications that occur by not responding immediately to requests for public safety.

Agency administrators will need to assess how to implement social networking into the 9-1-1 PSAP so that it is utilized effectively, such as dedicating a single workstation or allowing all workstations to monitor and respond to requests for assistance as well as evaluate the social media activities of other PSAPs and governmental entities to identify best practices for implementing social media.

### **2.2 Technical Impacts Summary**

PSAPs will need to develop an implementation plan that allows employees access to the social networking utilized by the PSAP. Firewall access and/or special privileges may need to be available for employees to monitor and post to social networking sites. Existing networks may need to be evaluated to determine the impact of implementing social networking to prevent overloading the network.

### 2.3 Security Impacts Summary

PSAPs should take into consideration all possible threats and risks involved in the use of social networking. In order to monitor or post information on social networking sites, it will be necessary for PSAP personnel to access the Internet. This will make PSAP equipment and/or computer networks vulnerable to email phishing, spam and virus attacks. PSAP administrators should consider utilizing social networking on a workstation that is on a separate network from their critical infrastructure to prevent any such attacks from comprising their emergency operations.

For those agencies who utilize social networking as a one-way communications tool with the public (i.e. press releases and announcements), administrators should select specific personnel who will be authorized to post information on behalf of the agency. The PSAP should develop policies as to the type of information that may be posted so that critical or restricted information is not inadvertently released, such as sensitive criminal justice information or details on juvenile victims. Policies should clearly define any approval processes instituted by the agency.

PSAPs should determine if any other entity has posted a social media site using the name of the agency. Agencies have found that media and individuals have created social media sites that appear to represent the agency, however are unauthorized sites. These agencies have found that requiring these unauthorized sites to shut down has been very difficult and time consuming. Agencies should work with the social media provider to ensure they are shut down.

### 2.4 Document Terminology

The terms "shall", "must" and "required" are used throughout this document to indicate required parameters and to differentiate from those parameters that are recommendations. Recommendations are identified by the words "desirable" or "preferably".

### 2.5 Reason for Issue/Reissue

NENA reserves the right to modify this document. Upon revision, the reason(s) will be provided in the table below.

Version	Approval Date	Reason For Changes
NENA-INF-001.1-2012	08/08/2012	Initial Document
NENA-INF-001.1.1-2012	05/28/2015	Update web page links
NENA-INF-001.1.1-2012	05/19/2022	Superseded by STA-044.1-2022 per document Charter.

### 2.6 Recommendation for Additional Development Work

There is a need for additional development work to facilitate fully integrating the use of social networking communications into a PSAP's operations. Considerations for network bandwidth and network security need to be addressed if social networking is used at a 9-1-1 calltaking position.

Currently, implementation of social media would need to be handled at a specific workstation(s). With Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1), it might be possible to incorporate it into the CPE equipment to receive and respond to requests.

## 2.7 Date Compliance

All systems that are associated with the 9-1-1 process shall be designed and engineered to ensure that no detrimental, or other noticeable impact of any kind, will occur as a result of a date/time change up to 30 years subsequent to the manufacture of the system. This shall include embedded application(s), computer-based or any other type application.

To ensure true compliance, the manufacturer shall upon request, provide verifiable test results to an industry acceptable test plan such as Telcordia GR-2945 or equivalent.

## 2.8 Anticipated Timeline

A timeline for this type of endeavor will vary from agency to agency based on their needs. Several basic steps should be considered before heading into the process.

- \* What is the goal of the agency: hiring, providing real time information, training or other topics?
- \* Which social networking site(s) provide the desired venue and audience?
- \* What type of approval process is needed from the represented agency?
- \* Is a contract employee needed for the project – what is the hiring timeline?
- \* What additional equipment will be needed for the project?

## 2.9 Costs Factors

A PSAP considering the use of social media should consider costs that may be incurred as a result, such as:

- \* Will current PSAP personnel implement and manage the social media sites? Will a contract worker be hired to provide expert advice on how to set up the site, what to consider, how to brand the agency and/or how to protect against security threats?
- \* Is additional equipment needed to access social media sites? Will personnel need separate computers to access social media sites so as to not impact critical infrastructure? Is additional software needed to allow for firewall access?
- \* Does the agency currently have an internet connection? If not, what means will be considered to access the social media sites?
- \* If multi-media will be included on the social media site, does the agency currently have access to the tools to create quality presentations?
- \* Advertising on social networking sites to promote the PSAP site.

## 2.10 Cost Recovery Considerations

If local 9-1-1 authorities determine they are going to receive emergency calls through social media, a cost recovery methodology will need to be developed to determine how to assess surcharges for delivery of the request for emergency assistance to the 9-1-1 PSAP. Should PSAPs decide to receive emergency calls through social media without a cost recovery method, discontinuing the service at a future point, due to cost effectiveness, may prove difficult once the public has established expectations for accessing PSAP services via social media.

## 2.11 Additional Impacts (non cost related)

The information or requirements contained in this NENA document are expected to have 9-1-1 Center Operations and 9-1-1 Technical impacts, based on the analysis of the authoring group. At the date of publication of this document, development had not started. The primary impacts are expected to include:

- \* Policy and Procedure creation and/or updates
- \* Firewall permissions, as well as access to social media sites

## 2.12 Intellectual Property Rights Policy

NENA takes no position regarding the validity or scope of any Intellectual Property Rights or other rights that might be claimed to pertain to the implementation or use of the technology described in this document or the extent to which any license under such rights might or might not be available; nor does it represent that it has made any independent effort to identify any such rights.

Consistent with the NENA IPR Policy, available at [www.nena.org/ipr](http://www.nena.org/ipr), NENA invites any interested party to bring to its attention any copyrights, patents or patent applications, or other proprietary rights that may cover technology that may be required to implement this standard.

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## 2.13 Acronyms/Abbreviations

Some acronyms/abbreviations used in this document have not yet been included in the master glossary. After initial approval of this document, they will be included. See NENA 00-001 - NENA Master Glossary of 9-1-1 Terminology located on the NENA web site for a complete listing of terms used in NENA documents.

<b>The following Acronyms are used in this document:</b>		
<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>** N)ew (U)pdate</b>
<i>IM</i>	Instant Messaging	N
<i>PSAP</i>	Public Safety Answering Point	N
<i>RSS</i>	Really Simple Syndication	N
<i>TOS</i>	Terms of Service	N

<b>The following Terms and Definitions are used in this document:</b>		
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>** N)ew (U)pdate</b>
<b>Comments</b>	Blogs may allow users to add comments under items, and may also provide a feed for comments as well as for main items. It allows users to keep up with conversations without having to revisit the site to check whether anything has been added	N
<b>Content</b>	Used to describe text, pictures, video and any other meaningful material that is on the Internet	N
<b>Facebook</b>	Facebook is a social network site that allows users to create profiles, send messages, search for other users, create networks of friends and fans, post images and videos, and share content. Facebook users consist of both individuals and organizations that develop pages containing information and content that can be generated through Facebook or by linking to another site such as YouTube, Flickr, or Twitter. Once users have established profiles, they can “friend” individuals or “like” organizations. (Description from IACP – Center for Social Media)	N
<b>Feeds</b>	A means to allow users to read, view or listen to items from blogs and other RSS-enabled sites without visiting the site, by subscribing and using an aggregator or newsreader. Feeds contain the content of an item and any associated tags without the design or structure of a web page	N
<b>Forums</b>	A discussion area on websites, where users can post messages or comment on existing messages asynchronously – that is, independently of time or place. Chat is the synchronous equivalent. Before blogs developed, email lists and forums were the main means of conversing online. Forum discussions happen in one place, and so can be managed and facilitated in ways that blog conversations can't because these are happening in many different places controlled by their authors	N

<b>The following Terms and Definitions are used in this document:</b>		
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>** New (U)date</b>
<b>Friends</b>	On social networking sites, Friends are contacts whose profile a user links to in their profile. On some sites users have to accept the link, in others, not	N
<b>Government 2.0</b>	Government 2.0 is the term for attempts to apply the social networking and integration advantages of Web 2.0 to the practice of government	N
<b>Groups</b>	Collections of individuals with some sense of unity through their activities, interests or values. They are bounded: users are in a group, or not. They differ in this from networks, which are dispersed, and defined by nodes and connections. Email lists and forums sit easily with bounded groups, blogs with networks - although the match with tools is not entirely clear-cut. A group may use a blog, and an email list may serve a network	N
<b>Hosting</b>	A blog, video or podcast needs a hosting service before it can appear online. Companies sometimes host their blogs on their own servers, but a better choice for video or audio is to use a host such as YouTube, Viddler o or Magnify.net for video and a host such as Libsyn for podcasts	N
<b>Links</b>	Highlighted text or images that, when clicked, jump users from one web page or item of content to another. Bloggers use links when writing, to reference their own or other content. Linking is another aspect of sharing, by which users offer content that may be linked, and acknowledge the value of other's people's contributions by linking to them. It is part of being open and generous.	N
<b>Networks</b>	Structures defined by nodes and the connections between them. In social networks the nodes are people, and the connections are the relationships that they have. Networking is the process by which users develop and strengthen those relationships	N
<b>Online</b>	Being connected to the Internet, and also being there in the sense of reading or producing content	N
<b>Post</b>	Content a user shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site	N
<b>Smartphone</b>	A handheld device capable of advanced tasks beyond those of a standard mobile phone. Capabilities might include email, chat, taking photos or video or hundreds of other tasks	N

<b>The following Terms and Definitions are used in this document:</b>		
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>** New (U)date</b>
<i><b>Social Media</b></i>	A term for the tools and platform users use to publish, converse and share content online. The tools include blogs, wikis, podcasts, and sites to share photos and bookmarks	N
<i><b>Social Networking</b></i>	Using a range of social media tools including blogs, video, images, tagging, lists of friends, forums and messaging to communicate with users	N
<i><b>Social Networks</b></i>	Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.	N
<i><b>Terms of Service (TOS)</b></i>	Basis on which users agree to use a forum or other web-based place for creating or sharing content. Users should check before agreeing what rights the site owners may claim over their content	N
<i><b>Tweet</b></i>	A post or status update on Twitter, a real-time social messaging system. Users add RT in a tweet if they are reposting something from another user's tweet.	N
<i><b>Twitter</b></i>	Twitter is a micro blogging tool that allows users to send short messages (140 characters or less), known as tweets that will immediately be distributed to their network of followers. People can receive tweets without having a Twitter account.	N
<i><b>Web 2.0</b></i>	The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term interchangeably with social media.	N

### **3 Social Networking in PSAPs**

#### **3.1 Human Resources**

Using social media for recruiting could potentially widen the applicant pool for PSAPs. Social media is not restricted to the municipality or region when advertising – it is seen worldwide. Posting information, such as the PSAP's testing process and job opening dates, inform potential applicants on what to expect and a time frame. A common challenge among agencies is the time it takes to put an applicant all the way through a hiring process, from application, testing, background, polygraph, psychological to final interview. Applicants usually have no idea what they are in for when putting in for a public safety position and aren't ready for the time in between steps. Posting anticipated time frames for each step will ready applicants for the extended time the process may take.

An agency currently hosting a social media site allows citizens to post questions to dispatchers. Allowing this to occur as part of a recruiting process would permit potential applicants to gather a

real view into what the position entails. Agencies should identify who has the authority to post to ensure the information that is dispersed is accurate and presents the agency in a positive light. Dispatchers could answer questions on the roles and responsibilities and other factors that are not always included, such as working long hours, weekends/holidays, varied shifts and nights. Encouraging dispatchers to post what they like most about their position also allows potential applicant to compare that with what they believe the job to entail. Many times the perspective of a potential applicant is very different from the actual job duties and requirements.

Agencies should consider including a disclaimer advising that the social networking site is for informational purposes only. Verbiage should be included to indicate the site is not monitored 24/7 and requests for a public safety response should be made by phone. A legal review should be done prior to posting information such as the PSAP testing process.

### **3.2 Public Education and PSAP Training**

Social Networking can be used in unique ways to educate the public, provide up to the minute information, as well as providing training within a PSAP. Many agencies are currently using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Nixle and You Tube. Citizens, media groups and businesses can sign up to “follow”, “friend” or “Like” the agency to receive updates and information as it is posted. PSAPs should be familiar with all terms, conditions and settings prior to setting up a social networking site.

PSAPs are able to take advantage of social networking mediums in many ways. Providing up to the minute notifications and updates reference incidents, such as accidents blocking major roadways, will allow the media to immediately broadcast the information and/or citizens to receive it on smart devices as they commute. This information assists the units on the scene to reduce traffic that must be redirected, as well as the citizens that are able to avoid delays and reduces inquiries called into the PSAP. Posting current crime trends, wanted persons details and who to notify reference tips allows citizens a venue to gather and provide critical details without having to call a PSAP. Before posting, it is recommended that all posts are deemed public information and not sensitive information. Times, dates and locations of community meetings, special fair type events, and crime and fire prevention opportunities could increase attendance with last minute reminders sent out.

A PSAP may use a social media site for internal training. Online videos may be created and/or posted to update skills, knowledge and abilities. This may generate a need to purchase video equipment to create the training. The PSAP would need to determine if the site was to be “locked down” to only PSAP employees or available to share with neighboring PSAPs. Updates on training classes, APCO and NENA type meetings and other PSAP related information could be posted for immediate access.

PSAPs must identify what type of information will be posted and who will post to determine what mode of social networking will be used. Information must be relevant and timely, requiring sites to be kept current. Posts must be made often enough to keep the users interest and not so often that they are inundated with information. For example, an agency may host a social media site allowing citizens to “ask a dispatcher” questions. While this would take tight policies and procedures

reference responses, it is an informative way to educate the public on what a dispatcher position entails and how incoming calls and responses are handled.

### 3.3 PSAP Operations

Prior to any implementation of social networking by a PSAP, policies and procedures should be developed that clearly define the role of social networking, restrictions on its usage and expectations of employee behavior. Written policies should clearly define that any criminal justice or medical information, including documents or photos, related to the agency's operations or its employees' privileged information is strictly prohibited and could pose a liability threat to the agency and potential damage any ongoing investigations.

A PSAP that regularly utilizes social networking as part of their normal communications should take into consideration if the additional workload provides justification for additional staffing. If social networking is proactively utilized to keep the public informed, i.e. tweeting vehicle accidents or road closures, a PSAP may need to consider specific position assignments for this task and those personnel who are authorized to perform this function.

There will inevitably be requests for service posted from a PSAP social media site. The PSAP must have policies and procedures guiding dispatchers on how to handle these requests. PSAPs will need to consider what priority should be given to the requests in relation to other incoming requests, such as telephone calls routed through a 9-1-1 network.

If a PSAP receives a request for assistance via a social networking site, the PSAP telecommunicator shall make an attempt to establish a voice connection with the citizen, if at all possible. There may be some situations where the citizen may be put in danger and unable to call, therefore, the telecommunicator must be prepared to handle the request as if it was received through the voice network.

If a PSAP receives a request for assistance via a social networking site, telecommunicators will need to utilize standard information gathering practices that include, at a minimum:

- A. address or exact location of the incident, if available
- B. Telephone number and/or an alternate means of contact such as user identification or email address.
- C. Type of emergency
- D. Time of occurrence
- E. Hazards
- F. Identity of individuals involved and their location

Non-English speaking social media requests will occur. The PSAP should identify resources that are available to interpret written requests. Some examples where translators may be found are internally within your agency, web-based applications, community colleges, universities, and language translation companies. There may be other resources that are available in the PSAP's community.

Social networking is primarily a text based means of communications. PSAPs should be prepared to receive information or requests that may be from the speech or hearing impaired community or individuals that use an abbreviated language such as teenagers. PSAPs should ensure that personnel are trained on the use of basic texting lingo, as well as ASL to bridge communications barriers. If at all possible, plain English is recommended to ensure that there is no miscommunication. Training should include some basic level of understanding of limitations with social media to ensure effective communications, for example, character limitations and messages possibly being broken into multiple messages not delivered in sequential order.

Policies and procedures should be included to determine how social media public safety requests will be handled and under what circumstances. Considerations should be made as to if the PSAP will only respond to requests posted on the PSAPs social networking site; when a call is received from a citizen reference a posting and/or by looking for key words on social networking sites that would indicate a need for a public safety response. The PSAP should become familiar with GPS enabled posts to assist in locating citizens requesting assistance. Apps are also available on smart devices that allow the device to be located based on their GPS location. For posts to social sites that do not provide a geographic location of the poster, PSAP personnel should have an understanding of the possible steps that can be utilized to pinpoint location based upon an IP address. PSAPs may need to contact service providers to obtain additional information in order to dispatch emergency responders. See Section 5 “Exhibits” for a sample emergency disclosure request form that can be utilized to request information from service providers.

PSAPs receiving requests for assistance from a social networking site that are not within their own jurisdiction should follow their current policies and procedures for referring calls to other jurisdictions.

PSAPs should include policies and procedures on how to handle information pertaining to a request for a public safety response after the incident has been completed. Considerations must be made as far as investigative purposes, privacy of the citizen making the request and/or how to capture the information for later use. A disclaimer should be included on the social media site indicating that everything posted is public information and remains a permanent record of the agency.

If an agency is not going to accept requests for assistance via their social media site, it is recommended that the ability to post be limited to administrators only and/or a disclaimer be placed on the social media site referring the citizen to the PSAP’s telephone number.

The PSAP should identify someone to monitor the agency’s social networking sites to determine if content posted, either by the public or agency employees is appropriate.

PSAPs should routinely perform searches to watch for unauthorized social media sites that falsely identify themselves as representing a PSAP. If such sites are found, the PSAP should take immediate action to contact the service provider to have the site shut down.

### 3.4 Contingency Planning

Each PSAP should determine what role social networking serves in their agency's contingency plans. Web 2.0 technologies can provide PSAPs with a tool to post feeds, comments, tweets, etc on social networking sites to provide and direct safety and incident information to the public. Social networking should be utilized in such a manner that it complements and supports an agency's existing means of disseminating information before, during and after a crisis or disaster.

Some PSAPs have opted to utilize social networking to provide the public with information to empower themselves to make decisions regarding their routine daily activities, such as posting traffic accidents or road closures to re-direct traffic to an alternate route. This allows the public to implement their own personal contingency plan to avoid adverse situations.

During crisis or disaster situations (i.e. hurricane or ice storm), a PSAP should augment their public announcement efforts by publishing information such as shelter locations, evacuation routes and food and water distribution to Internet sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Nixle or You Tube to ensure a wide dissemination, especially if normal communications methods have been compromised. If an emergency operations plan has been activated, this function may be assigned to another individual, such as the PSAP's public information officer.

PSAPs should monitor their agency's social networking sites or those of their city or county during a crisis or disaster in the event that a citizen posts critical information such as flooded roadways and tornado sightings. This type of information assists the PSAP in responding to emergencies as well as assisting emergency officials with allocation of resources to affected areas. Telephone networks may become congested during crisis or disaster incidents preventing citizens from contacting emergency services. Citizens may post requests for emergency assistance on an agency's social networking site if they are unable to make a telephone call and the agency's site has been configured to receive postings from the public.

### 4 Recommended Reading and References

American Red Cross survey – “Web Users Increasingly Rely on Social Media to Seek Help in a Disaster” <http://newsroom.redcross.org/2010/08/09/press-release-web-users-increasingly-rely-on-social-media-to-seek-help-in-a-disaster/>

IACP Center for Social Media - <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/>

## 5 Exhibits

### EMERGENCY DISCLOSURE REQUEST

ATTN:

Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2702(b)(8) and § 2702(c)(4), this agency requests disclosure of customer information from a user(s) of your service that it has been reported to us that the individual(s) may be experiencing a 9-1-1 emergency that warrants the response of police, fire or emergency medical services. The timely disclosure of such information will ensure that this individual(s)'s health and welfare are not jeopardized due to a delay in retrieving the information.

1. What is the nature of the emergency involving death or serious physical injury?
2. Whose death or serious physical injury is threatened?
3. What is the imminent nature of the threat?
4. Please explain why the normal disclosure process (including any statutory emergency procedures) would be insufficient or untimely in light of the deadline set forth in Question 3.
5. What specific information in the service provider's possession related to this emergency are you seeking to receive on an emergency basis?
6. How will this information assist in averting the threatened death or serious physical injury?

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Badge #

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Request

## 6 Previous Acknowledgments

None. This is the initial document.

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