

BLE, SOCIAL MEDIA & FLOOD RISK AWARENESS

Floods can occur anywhere after heavy rain events. The floodplains identified by Base Level Engineering analysis provides expansive flood hazard information – flood extents, water surface elevation and flood depth grids that may be used by communities to inform residents and business owners of the potential for flooding in their vicinity.

Communities have the opportunity to share information about risks from natural hazards with a variety of audiences, through a variety of mediums/channels. Residents look to those in their local government entities to assess and identify areas of risk and discuss steps locals should take to minimize the impact of these hazards.

Local governments are ideally positioned to create timely, pertinent posts that spur clicks, likes, comments, shares, and views. Social media opens the possibility of a conversation with residents and helps residents navigate complex local government websites to find the resources they are seeking.

This module provides links to a number of communications resources and some content for use by communities that have Base Level Engineering data available.

Why Social Media? Social media can be an effective tool that local, state, and federal governments can use to communicate and engage with the public. It is a powerful way to build trust and demonstrate transparency with communities and individuals alike. Recent studies have found that over 85 percent of local government agencies use social media platforms to get information to their constituents. **Social media channels are excellent for:**

Reach

Social media provides access to a wide variety of audiences and meets a clear service demand from citizens. People are turning more frequently to social channels, rather than government websites, with questions, requests, or complaints.

Accessibility

These platforms are available to everyone with a computer and/or smartphone at no cost.

Usability

Using social media is simple to learn.

Immediacy

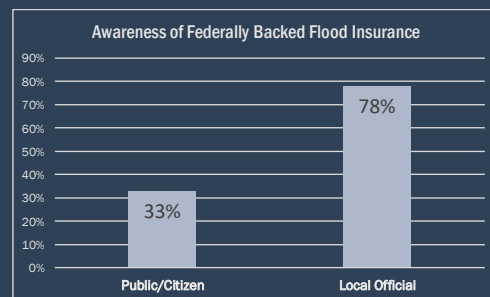
Information can reach audiences in seconds rather than days.

Conversations

Spur comments or spark discussions around hot-button issues that allows for two-way communication.

A recent FEMA Survey shows:

- Local officials understand their communities are at risk of flooding, while the public does not.
- Local officials understand that federally backed flood insurance is available, while the public does not.



By tailoring posts to be personally relevant to your community's needs, communities have the power to influence and amplify important messages. A community's residents will follow a local government's social media page out of local pride and the promise of utility.

Getting Started. Each community is unique, and a communication plan may be needed to address the interests and needs specific to its community. Proven planning steps will help set a strong foundation for this type of communication. The Flood Risk Communication Toolkit is available on FEMA's website at: <https://go.usa.gov/xsGvw>. The following toolkit modules are intended to support risk awareness and social media planning efforts at the community level.

The **Communication Plan Guide** walks users through planning community engagement during the map update process and beyond. It explains the best ways to set up and use the other items in the Toolkit.

The **Social Media Guide** (with Editorial Calendars) includes tested methods, content strategies, and suggested social media posts for events that mark the journey to update flood risk data and maps.

The **Appendix** includes sample content collected from communities to inspire communications within your community (e.g., news releases, PSAs, Tweets, newsletters, blog posts, utility bill inserts, fact sheets, community dashboards, and podcasts) for use during the mapping process as well as to promote local awareness throughout the year.

The **Video Series** includes eight short videos designed to help community officials and decision makers understand, relate to, and communicate the objectives of updating the community's flood risk data and maps, including how to use updated flood risk information to increase community resilience.

Craft Your Message. Having conversations that persuade people to act on their flood risks can be difficult. As humans, we are hardwired to prioritize the actions that will benefit us immediately and less likely to act on uncertainties or things that may happen in the future. Here are some quick tips to discuss complex topics in meaningful ways:

TIP #1



Relate to Your Audience

You know your community best. What are the things that are most important to residents? What does the community aspire to be in 10, 20, or 50 years? We often filter the information people tell us through the lens of our own beliefs and values. Start the conversation by relating flood mitigation and community resilience to what matters most to that audience.

TIP #3



Tell Stories

Stories of personal experience help people make those emotional connections that are so important to believing that risks are real. They can also help people feel that protecting themselves from these risks is important.

TIP #2



Avoid Jargon

Speak plainly, and try to limit discussions of highly complex or technical topics that go too far into the weeds. At its core, convincing your audience that flood mitigation is important requires tapping into their emotional connection with the things that may be at risk—their homes, their businesses, or their cherished spaces. Leading the conversation with data risks losing your audience at the beginning.

TIP #4



Be Credible

Answer questions honestly. When you don't have all the answers, admit it—and commit to finding them and following up.



Suggested Posts. The following table provides content for community use, these posts include some other resources and toolkits that will increase awareness and empower residents to gain understanding, while providing resources that may be used by individuals.

Platform	Content	Embedded Links
Facebook	Do you know your current flood risk? [Municipality] has new flood risk information that will help inform families, homes, schools, and businesses of their flood risk. Click here to better understand flood hazards in your area.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Twitter Facebook	Are you considering building a new home? Or buying a different home or business? Click here to better understand the flood risk in that area.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Twitter Facebook	Click here to view flood risk in your vicinity. Choose Property Look Up and enter your home and work address to get a site specific report.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Facebook	During a disaster, response time matters. Click here to see the flood risk information that [Municipality] first responders and city planners are using plan and prepare for the next storm event. These efforts keep families, homes, schools, and businesses in safer during a flood event.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Facebook	May is Building Safety Month and [Municipality] has recently updated building ordinances to help make new buildings safer. By using FEMA's Base Level Engineering data that provides expansive flood extent and site specific information. Click here to learn more.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Twitter	Tornado safe rooms create a safe haven for residents when high winds threaten communities, but cannot be located in floodplains. Click here to check for flood areas.	https://webapps.usgs.gov/infrm/estBFE/
Twitter	One inch of water could cost you \$25,000. Check out the potential cost of flooding here .	https://www.floodsmart.gov/flood-insurance-cost/calculator

Follow Others. Your community social media pages can follow other Federal and State partners providing content to retweet or share with your followers. Follow FEMA's national and regional pages, USACE Division and District pages, National Weather Service and Flood Forecast Centers, US Geological Survey State pages, State Emergency Management and other partners to gain access to timely information when natural hazards endanger your community. **See below for a list of partner twitter handles to follow.**

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| @fema | @USACE_SWD | @GOHSEP |
| @FEMARegion6 | @NOAA | @NMDHSEM |
| @femaregion6cpo | @FederalAlliance | @OKWaterBoard |
| @NWSFlashFlood | @quakesmart | @OKEM |
| @USGS | @AR_Emergencies | @twddb |
| @USGS_TexasFlood | @La_DOTD | @TDEM |

Additional Social Media Content. There are a number of additional natural disaster risk content for use.

Location	Facebook	Twitter	Blog	YouTube	Description
Federal Alliance for Safe Homes https://flash.org/	Y	Y	Y	Y	Building Codes, Safe Rooms, Home Owner Insurance Guide
Flood Smart https://www.floodsmart.gov/	Y	Y	N	Y	Spring floods, hurricane, flood after fire, flood insurance
Ready.gov https://www.ready.gov/	Y	Y	N	Y	Flooding, earthquake, pandemic, emergency alerts
National Weather Service www.weather.gov/safety/flood	Y	Y	N	N	Flood safety, before a flood, during a flood, after a flood
NWS Graphics for Use	https://www.weather.gov/wrn/flood_infographics				
Spring/Snowmelt Flooding	https://agents.floodsmart.gov/spring-flood-in-your-community				
How to buy Flood Insurance	https://www.floodsmart.gov/flood-insurance/buy				
100 Year Flood, Not what you think	https://youtu.be/EACkiMRT0pc				
What is Riverine Flooding	https://youtu.be/j2Or5zWjVgg				
When the Earth Shakes	https://youtu.be/MKILThTPxQs				
After Wildfire, Your Risk Goes Up	https://youtu.be/R4I54vQwYzs (English) https://youtu.be/_7WKE2ivpz0 (Spanish)				
Prepping a Go Bag	https://youtu.be/Htgqb0pwrlQ				
When the Clouds Form	https://youtu.be/LmCnXWN0Dwc				
When the Storm Comes	https://youtu.be/GsjUfdaW67k				
When the Waves Swell	https://youtu.be/STiMKEYZ3Q4				
When the Earth Shakes	https://youtu.be/MKILThTPxQs				
When the Fire Starts	https://youtu.be/tWhTdfHQWqs				
Prepared, Not Scared	https://youtu.be/Bx9trPeby7w				
Be Ready (Flood Infographic)	https://28u3pc3b0g76kgxr73e7scbr-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/infographics-br-floods-1.jpg				

Local community officials can use social media to share accurate and timely information. Your community residents expect it. FEMA’s Awareness Survey showed:

- 47% of respondents want to hear about flood risk from their Mayor
- 32% expect to hear from floodplain manager
- 10% expect to hear from FEMA

