

Briefing Room

DHS First Responder Communities of Practice

February 11, 2011

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate First Responder Communities of Practice Website is a vetted, professional networking, project collaboration, and resource-sharing platform for first responders and other personnel working in homeland security capacities. The site is focused on emergency response, preparedness, resiliency, planning, management, and homeland security-related matters. Site members can network with others in their fields and areas of interest; join or start new communities to collaborate “virtually” with others through wikis, blogs, discussion boards, real-time chat, and internal Website e-mail; find and share resources and contacts; store and access documents; and stay connected through e-mail notification of site activities. In addition to managing the site, the First Responder Communities of Practice Website also reports on the emergency response community’s broader efforts to use social media to improve disaster preparedness and resilience.

Go to <https://Communities.FirstResponder.gov> to request membership.

DHS Working Group Recommends Social Media Best Practices

DHS First Responder Communities of Practice recently launched the Virtual Social Media Working Group (VSMWG), which is comprised of first responders and homeland security professionals from various disciplines, localities, sectors, and government agencies across



Coast Guard officers review a hurricane situation report. Smart phones like this one offer public safety and homeland security personnel a simple way to interact with the public. Courtesy of FEMA.

the country. The mission of the VSMWG is to provide recommendations to the emergency preparedness, response, and homeland security communities on the safe and sustainable use of social media technologies before, during, and after emergencies.

Members were selected by DHS First Responder Technologies (R-Tech) program based on their experience in leveraging social media technologies to pursue the missions of their agencies. Many VSMWG members have served as speakers, trainers, and subject matter experts at major homeland security-related workshops, roundtables, and conferences on the topic of social media. Representing the fields of emergency management, law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, public health, public utilities, and local

The First Responder Technologies (R-Tech) Bulletin is a publication sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate. The R-Tech Bulletin discusses technologies of interest to first responders that have received funding, in part, from the government. Mention of these technologies should not be construed as an endorsement of either the technology, or the entity producing it, by the Federal government.

DHS First Responder Communities of Practice (continued)

government, the VSMWG strives to be a dynamic voice in the social media and public safety arena, incorporating the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders.

VSMWG members will collaborate via virtual meetings to identify and discuss responder issues and challenges with social media. They will look at myriad issues, such as standards and policies, and will provide recommended guidance on using social media in public safety. The working group may engage with subject matter experts from different sectors to work towards resolutions to these issues.

The First Responder Communities of Practice platform will serve as the primary location for the VSMWG to

conduct activities, share developments, and connect with other homeland security professionals regarding the value of social media for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. The group will play an active role in establishing the Make America Safer through Social Media Community on the First Responder Communities of Practice as a national resource for social media and public safety-related information and best practices.

To collaborate with the Virtual Social Media Working Group, help grow the First Responder Communities of Practice repository of social media best practices and tools, or participate in forward-thinking discussions with others engaged in this field, join the Make America Safer through Social Media Community at <https://Communities.FirstResponder.gov>.



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