

Appendix B: Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) Case Study

On April 15-17, the First Responders Group (FRG) and the DHS Virtual Social Media Working Group participated in the State of Louisiana [Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness \(GOHSEP\) Annual Hurricane Exercise](#) at the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) in Baton Rouge. The goal of this collaboration was to determine and refine a process to integrate social media into the agency's operational workflow, in a manner scalable enough to support decisions being made across the entire state.

For this experiment, the VSMWG leveraged lessons learned from previous experimentation, such as the Joint Inter-Agency Field Exploration (JIFX), the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC) Capstone exercise and the Canada U.S. Enhanced Resiliency Experiment Series (CAUSE) III. During each of these events, the VSMWG worked with stakeholders and collaboration partners at all levels of government and across all sectors to identify gaps and requirements in policy, process and technology. These gaps, in tandem with discussion with GOHSEP, were used to inform the development of the objectives, a plan of action and a proposed process for integrating social media into GOHSEP's existing operational workflow. The process was then discussed during the exercise, specifically "how do we streamline the identification of essential information in social media in order to better assign and deploy resources?"

Following the exercise and subsequent evaluation, GOHSEP operations tweaked the proposed process to better follow the current operational flow and chain of command, with minimal changes and disruptions. Additionally, GOHSEP discussed plans to further consider:

- Moving the social media coordinator seat next to the Fusion Center representative to streamline coordination and verification of information as it is found in social media in order to mitigate duplication of efforts between law enforcement and emergency management;
- Leveraging a digital volunteer team to support identification of applicable information across multiple social media channels;
- Leveraging Google Docs as a place to capture and publish information found in social media, and integrating Google Docs into WebEOC as a board for easier access;
- Leveraging a geoform, developed in previous FRG-led experimentation, to facilitate guided input of information found in social media across the state;
- Publishing information submitted through the geoform as a data layer;
- Configuring an operations dashboard (a feature of the ESRI ArcGIS Online toolkit already owned and operated by GOHSEP), and integrating into WebEOC as a board for easier access, to visualize the results of the geoform submissions, including:
 - Types and volume of issues identified (bar chart);
 - Reports requiring follow-up;
 - High-level visualization of issues presented geographically;
 - Detailed information for each when clicking on a map point;

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- Thresholds (e.g., an alert is produced when more than X reports are submitted about a specific issue type); and
- Time elapsed since submission of report.
- Asking the state's Regional Coordinators to facilitate submission of information from their regions through the geoform;
- Once information is identified as actionable, operations will review and determine in which parish the issue resides, then contact the local Office of Emergency Preparedness or the Regional Coordinator to advise and verify; and
- Ownership remains at the local and state regional level, which will address the issue or determine if they should make a WebEOC request.

For the event, FRG and the VSMWG collaborated with GOHSEP operations, the public information officer, state and parish government representatives, and staff from the [Louisiana State Analytical and Fusion Exchange](#).

The VSMWG and GOHSEP took and documented the following steps in order to identify, assess and determine the best process for integrating social media into GOHSEP's operational workflow.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY AND REPORT

- Identify partners;
- Identify operational processes;
- Identify technologies used and for what purposes;
- Identify information requirements (EEI);
- Identify reporting requirements; and
- Identify technical requirements.

STEP TWO: ASSESS AND VERIFY

- Given requirements identified in first step, identify possible methods for:
 - Analysis;
 - Information products; and
 - Integration considerations.
- Identify verification requirements.
- Identify opportunities for coordination with others monitoring and using social media.

STEP THREE: UNDERSTANDING VOLUME AND CRITICALITY OF REPORTS

- A heat map view can be used to visualize the density of data. A data aggregation function can be used to 'roll-up' data from points to county or parish polygons. A user can click on a county or parish to identify associated source records (individual reports).
- Further development is required to normalize counts based on demographic data.
- Further development is also required to define count thresholds by jurisdiction to assign

appropriate color status.

STEP FOUR: ASSIGNMENT

- Method for determining if information is actionable;
- Process for coordination across jurisdictions and government levels; and
- Process for integrating social media information and need into operational process (Web EOC).

STEP FIVE: ACTION

- Once assigned, identify feedback loop; and
- Identify partners involved.

Figure 2: GOHSEP Process for Operationalizing Social Media

