# How to Harness the Lifesaving Power of Twitter in an Emergency

## // Disaster Preparedness Guide

StormGeo
*Freedom to Perform*

While some may see it as packed with political opinions and celebrity gossip, **Twitter** could literally save your life during an emergency. This social networking service is the quickest way to get important and accurate information from credible sources, employees or loved ones, as well as request help from emergency services, in times when conventional communication methods are not an option.

Emergencies caused by severe weather often down phone lines, which cuts off landlines and causes an overload to the system that stops mobile phones from working. This is where Twitter comes in—enabling users to instantly tap into a network of friends, family, colleagues and local officials while monitoring the storm and staying updated on evacuations.

### This guide provides the following:

// Main advantages of Twitter vs. other social media sites

// How to use Twitter (basics + in an emergency)

// Why Twitter should be included in a business' emergency response plan

## // What Makes Twitter Different From Other Social Media?

What separates Twitter from all other internet-based social media platforms is its reliance on **SMS** (short message service) technology. This means...

**Twitter utilizes communications between wireless mobile devices without needing the internet.**

Unlike voice calls, where you're either connected or you're not, SMS messages will keep trying to get through to the recipient, even if delayed.

Another benefit of Twitter is its brevity, which allows users to send and receive the most vital information instantaneously and in a fixed fashion (i.e. users can scroll through past tweets).

When flood victims couldn't get through to 911 during Hurricane Harvey in 2017, they were able to ignite rescue efforts by contacting emergency workers via Twitter, Facebook and NextDoor.

### // Rule to Remember

The caveat of social media is both its blessing and its curse: It makes everyone a publisher. During Hurricane Irma, people shared videos of past weather events, which may have complicated or confused rescue efforts. It's therefore important that users hold themselves accountable by only sharing information they know to be credible.

## What can Twitter do in the aftermath of disaster?

Connects communities to aid rescue, recovery, cleanup and volunteer efforts

Helps dispel rumors and correct misinformation

Enables people to express support

# // Main Advantages of Twitter in an Emergency

- Twitter can be used in disaster areas when voice communications are limited or not available. By using Twitter instead of making a call, voice lines are open for emergency agencies.

- Twitter can be used instead of voice when silence is critical, such as a home invasion. By tweeting to several emergency agencies, your message can be quickly received and acted upon while you remain silent and hidden.

- Twitter is far-reaching. Using Twitter allows your message to reach around the world to an almost unlimited audience.

- Twitter doesn't rely on the internet or voice-transmission channels.

- Twitter is completely free to download and use.

## // Setting Up Twitter Pre-Emergency

With the 2019 Atlantic hurricane season now underway, businesses should have their preparedness plans in place. If that plan doesn't include Twitter, we'd argue that it's incomplete. Fortunately, it's not too late to expand your preparedness toolkit. Follow the steps below to learn how to leverage this simple communication tool during an emergency.

First things first, if you don't already have one, **establish a free Twitter account** either through the web or by downloading the app.

**Once complete, set up your account so it's ready to be used in an emergency:**

### // Get comfortable creating tweets

Type your tweet in the compose box at the top of your Home timeline, or click the tweet button in the top navigation. You can include 4 photos or a video in your tweet, which can be up to 280 characters (longer text continues in consecutive tweets).

### // Encourage others to join as well

Tell friends, family, colleagues and employees of your intention to use Twitter in an emergency so that they know to look on your Twitter feed if anything happens in your area. This enables them to alert relevant authorities for you (and vice versa).

### // Subscribe to Twitter Alerts

Receive notifications when local, national and international organizations that you've selected publish an alert. These alerts can contain minute-by-minute information, such as public safety warnings and evacuation instructions from organizations like FEMA and the Red Cross.

### // Follow trusted sources and media organizations

Get the latest information as it happens. For emergency info, follow weather and news outlets, police and traffic sources, plus local, city, state and federal emergency agencies. Find and follow these agencies before an emergency occurs.

### // Understand Twitter's terminology

While the act of 'tweeting' may sound ridiculous and you may not like the idea of 'following' an agency, these are the terms used by Twitter. Don't let this terminology stand between you and the ability to communicate during a disaster.

### // Download Twitter Lite

In areas where telecommunications have been disrupted, Twitter Lite is the ideal platform to communicate and receive emergency updates because its simpler features make it faster and more accessible. Information on Twitter Lite can be accessed offline as well. Twitter Lite is available for download through a web browser.

### // Turn on Notifications

Advise your followers to do the same during an emergency. This will allow you and them to receive a push notification whenever there is a tweet and can help get vital information to those in need.

## // How to Use Twitter in an Emergency

### Use the right hashtags.

Hashtags are the best way for people to find information and conversations online about a specific topic. They are used by media, government agencies and relief/volunteer organizations, as well as normal users. For example, #HurricaneHarvey allowed Twitter users to send, receive and search for information specific to the 2017 hurricane. Create hashtags by placing the pound sign (#) in front of a word or unspaced phrase in a tweet.

Familiarize yourself with the hashtags being used in times of disaster and use them wisely to help inform people. Avoid using them for casual commentary or jokes.

### Track an event as it unfolds with Twitter Moments.

Twitter Moments shows stories from other users of current, popular and relevant topics, allowing users to discover what is unfolding on Twitter instantly. To watch Twitter Moments, click your profile photo and select Moments from the drop-down menu.authorities for you (and vice versa).

### Advise your followers to tweet with their exact location.

Be specific about where you are and what conditions are like in order to get the help you need. You can also share tweets like this from your network to help them get noticed by the necessary authorities.

### Mention or tag media, government agencies, relief and volunteer organizations.

Contact officials directly if you need help or can help with relief efforts. They may be able to spread the word by sharing your tweet. Be sure to use the "at" sign (@) in front of the agency's Twitter account name so your tweet will be directed to the agency.

### Continue to send messages...

...even if you aren't sure they are getting through. Tweets and text messages need less power than phone calls and might be received even if the phone signals are affected.
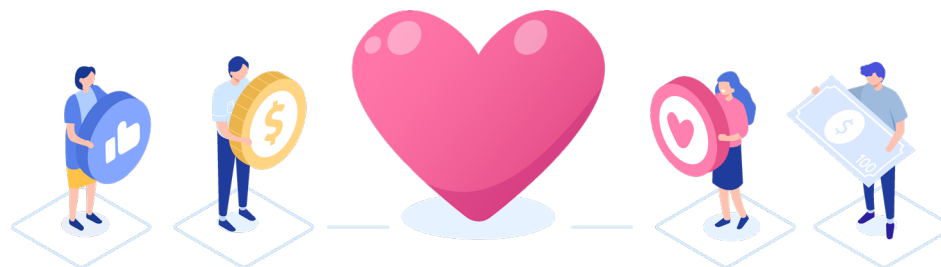
### Most importantly!
Keep your phone charged and with you at all times.

**While it's easy to see Twitter as just another social media platform, it can enable you to get help when other forms of communication fail while providing the latest, most critical and trusted information during a disaster. As such, Twitter is a worthy addition to your preparedness toolkit.**

**To fully prepare your business for a potential weather crisis, having your own team of meteorological experts just a phone call away is invaluable. Avoiding even a single weather-related shutdown or risk can mean the difference between continuity and the end of your business.**

**Interested in learning more?**
**Contact info@stormgeo.com to get started.**

## // About StormGeo

StormGeo is a global provider of advanced weather intelligence and decision support services that are relied upon to maintain business continuity, avoid supply chain disruption, protect assets and maximize productivity for industries including healthcare, oil and gas, insurance, telecom and retail. The company has offices worldwide, including six 24/7/365 operations centers. As a participant in the UN Global Compact for Sustainable Ocean Business, our passion for weather and the protection of natural resources motivates us to support our clients in making informed, environmentally responsible business decisions.

**Storms can cause business closure and costly repairs, resulting in significant detriments to revenue, infrastructure and the environment. Preparing enables you to:**

Avoid business disruption          Protect people & assets

Mitigate toxic substances          Have the necessary toolkit

Generate response plans          Reduce the costs of recovery