# Salimah LaForce

## Wireless RERC

# Social Media, Emergency Communications and People with Disabilities

## June 22, 2011

# Topics Covered

- Introduction: Emergency Access and People with Disabilities

- Wireless RERC WEC Project

- In the meantime…

- Social Media Survey Findings

- Now what?...Considerations for Accessible Emergency Communications

# Introduction

- Access to emergency information
  - Modernization of EAS
  - CMAS
  - CVAA

- Disabilities are diverse
  - Abilities, situation, aging into disabilities
  - Not all disabilities are obvious

- Access to emergency services
  - Receiving the message & content
  - Ability to take action
  - Technological issues

# Statistics in Perspective

- American Red Cross responded to more than 60,000 disasters in 2010

- 54 million people have some type of disability, by 2030 it will equal 20% of the population

- 96% of the U.S. population use wireless services or products

- 85% of people with disabilities use wireless products and services

# Wireless RERC Mission:

Promote equitable access to wireless technologies by people with disabilities and encourage the adoption of universal design in future generations of wireless devices and applications.

## Wireless Emergency Communications (WEC) Project established in 2006:

- Develop prototypes of promising technology approaches to broadcast local and targeted alerts in accessible formats

- Field trial working prototypes

- Generate recommendations

**http://www.wirelessrerc.org/publications/emergency-communications-and-people-with-disabilities/**

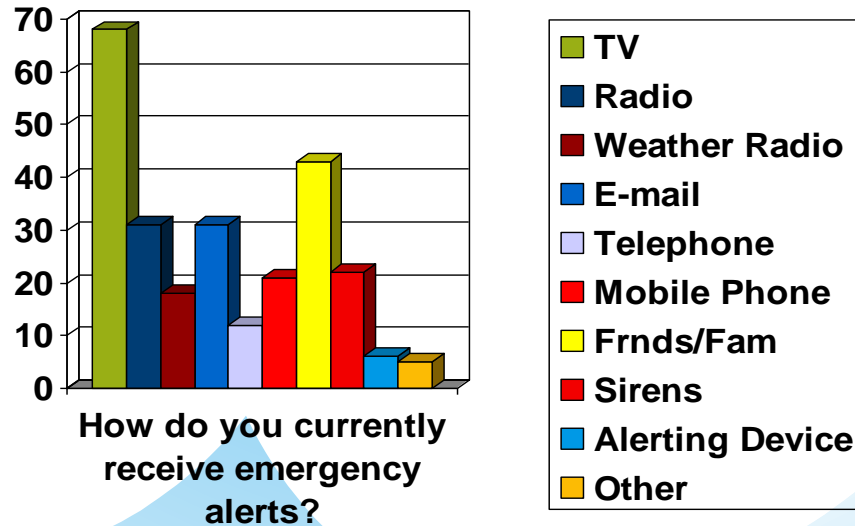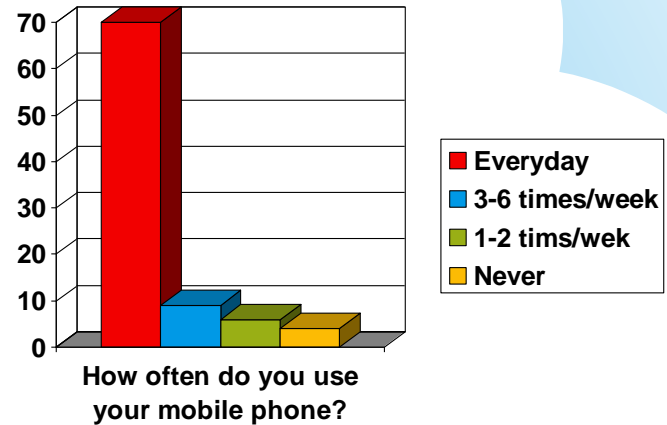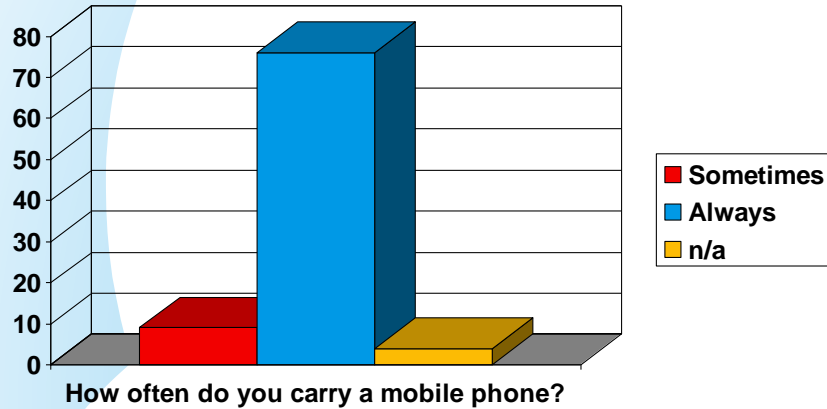# WEC Tech

# Some Pre-trial questions

# To Confirm Emergency Information:

91.9% turn on television

41.9% turn on Radio

45% check/send E-mail

**54.8% check Internet news sources**

43.5% use mobile phones/PDAs

66% contact friends and family

77% check their surroundings (environmental cues)

# IN THE MEANTIME...

# *Official Use of Social Media*

- **74% of States use SM to disseminate emergency information**
  - Twitter 36%
  - Facebook 29%
  - YouTube 13%

- **45% of Cities use SM to disseminate emergency information**
  - Twitter:  35%
  - Facebook:  34%
  - YouTube: 11%

Sets Precedent. Sets Expectations.

Image courtesy of Patrice Cloutier, Blogger

"Rather than trying to convince the public to adjust to the way we at FEMA communicate, we must adapt to the way the public communicates ... We must use social media tools to more fully engage the public as a critical partner in our efforts." ~ Craig Fugate, FEMA

# Consumer Advisory Network

- Nationwide survey of people with disabilities
- November-January 2010-2011
  1. Contacting 911 emergency services
  2. Using social media during public emergencies

**Respondent Profile**

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of respondents | 1343 |
| Number of respondents with disability | 1115 |
| Age range | 18-91 |
| Age average | 51.6 |
| Standard deviation | 13.5 years |

# FCC Survey

- Emergency Access Advisory Committee

- Nationwide survey of people with disabilities and seniors

- March 2011 – April 2011

  - Questions regarding emergency calling

  - More than 3000 respondents

  - Report pending
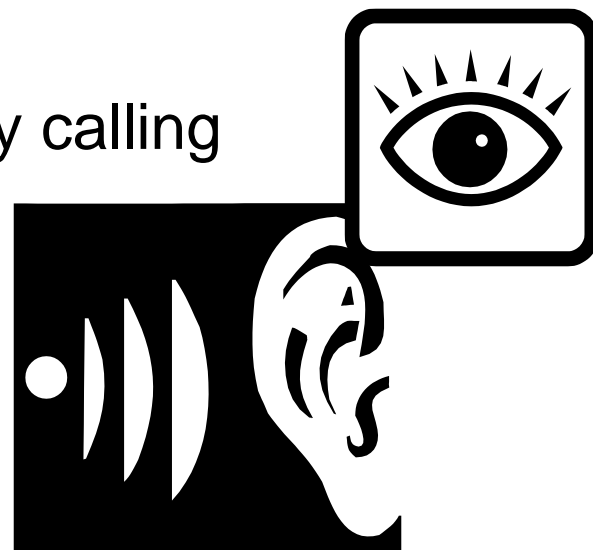
# USING SOCIAL MEDIA DURING PUBLIC EMERGENCIES

# Do you access social media on the following devices? (non-exclusive)

| Devices | Yes (%) |
|---|---|
| Desktop computer | 41% |
| Laptop computer | 31% |
| Cellphone | 22% |

- Almost 2/3 (63%) of respondents with disabilities use social media.

- Desktop and laptop platforms are the most commonly used devices for accessing social media.

- Cellphones are the least commonly used platforms for accessing social media. More than 1 in 5 access social media on cell phones.

# Do you access social media on the following devices? (exclusive)

|  | Percent |
|---|---|
| Desktop only | 23% |
| Laptop only | 12% |
| Cellphone only | 3% |
| Desktop and laptop | 6% |
| Desktop and cellphone | 7% |
| Laptop and cellphone | 7% |
| Desktop, laptop, cell | 5% |
| **TOTAL** | **63%** |

**25% of respondents with disabilities use more than one type of device (e.g., desktop and cell phone) to access social media.**

# Number of social media outlets used by respondents with disabilities to receive and verify public alerts

| Number of social media outlets used | Received alert | Verified alert |
|---|---:|---:|
| 0 | 77.4 | 84.3 |
| 1 | 15.7 | 11.8 |
| 2 | 4.6 | 2.6 |
| 3 | 1.4 | 0.7 |

Social media are used by a small, but substantial percentage of people with disabilities to receive and verify public alerts.

- 22% have received public alerts via social media
- 16% have verified public alerts using social media

# Social media outlets used by respondents with disabilities to receive and verify public alerts

|  | Received alert | Verified alert |
|---|---|---|
| Facebook | 11.6% | 8.6% |
| Twitter | 4.6% | 2.5% |
| Listservs | 4.2% | 2.1% |
| Yahoo | 3.8% | 2.3% |
| YouTube | 1.3% | 1.0% |
| MySpace | 1.3% | 0.7% |
| Google Buzz | 1.2% | 0.8% |
| LinkedIn | 0.0% | 0.6% |
| Foursquare | 0.3% | 0.3% |

# Considerations for Accessible EC

"One of the challenges we face as a nation is ensuring not only that our technological prowess empowers ALL Americans to lead better and more productive lives, but also that we harness these tools to preserve and protect the lives, property, and public safety of ALL citizens by making them universally accessible and usable."

~David Furth, FCC

# Considerations for Accessible EC

- **Technology**
  - Accessible formats to a variety of devices
  - Integration of social media into existing EC systems
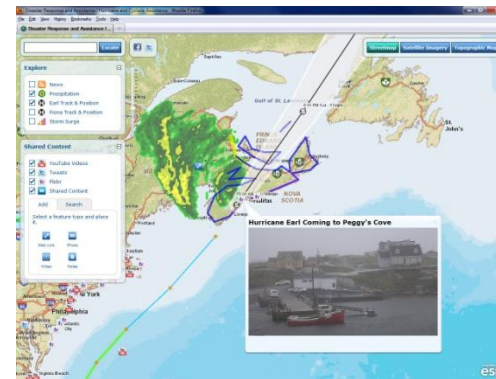




- **Training and Education**
  - Integrate into planning, exercises and simulations
  - Outreach to people with disabilities on options for receiving emergency information in accessible formats

# Considerations for Accessible EC

- **Policy and Practice**
  - Ensure rulemakings include the needs of people with disabilities
  - Social Media for alerting and/or communicating emergency information – create best practices – be consistent – make official

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www.wirelessrerc.org