



# Web 2.0 for ESF-8 response: Emerging opportunities for greater situational awareness



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## Summary

The H1N1 pandemic presented a unique opportunity for the public health community to achieve enhanced situational awareness (SA) and emergency response through the use of web-based social media tools ("web 2.0").

## Situational awareness

**Situational awareness** = "The ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about an incident."  
National Health Security Strategy, (2009)

**Traditional situational awareness tools:** teleconferences, situational reports (written) & email correspondence

## Social media (SM) usage in US

- 75% adults use Internet
- 80% own a cell phone
- 55% 18-29yo access Internet wirelessly via cell phone
- African-Americans heavy mobile web users
- 57% adults use social networking sites / 73% of teens
- 19% adults use Twitter / 8% of teens
- ~40% adults get email/text alerts

## Types of social media for SA

Blogs  
Twitter  
MySpace  
SMS/Texting  
Facebook  
Downloadable Apps  
Wikipedia  
Flickr  
Mashups

## Social media for situational awareness

### ADVANTAGES

- Immediacy
- Simple & easy to use
- Heavily used by public
- Sometimes rich data

### DISADVANTAGES

- Trustworthiness of source
- Security concerns (IT)
- A lot of noise!
- Low on caution
- Not used by all population groups

## So why use it?

- Ability to push out information to public quickly
- Ability to pull in data from SM tools to see what public is "really saying" – "ground-truthing"
- It is what is being used
- BUT, using the right SM tools to reach the right audiences is crucial



## H1N1 + Social Media for SA

### THE CASE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

- School closures not reportable to state or federal governments
- Schools do not like to announce they are closed
- 15,000 school districts & ~100,000 schools in the US



How to monitor school closures in US due to H1N1?

## How

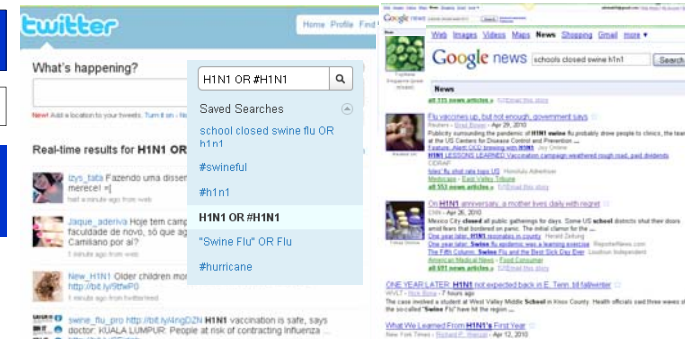


**Facebook** > young adults (mid/high school), parents  
**Twitter** > parents, young adults (mid/high school)  
**Google** > search news, blog postings, websites for closures

**Twitter** > use saved search w/RSS feed for updates  
search: school closed swine flu OR h1n1  
**Google News** > use saved search w/RSS feed for updates  
search: schools closed swine h1n1

**BUT**

- Requires time to sift & sort through the "noise" for the useful information
- Still requires verification with an official source (if possible)



## Conclusion

While worthwhile to pilot, due to the high volume of "noise", lack of people, and time to review and sort, this was not a very efficient system to use. However, it was a good learning opportunity.

