

# Social media during emergencies

Social media can be immensely helpful during times of emergency, but it can also be very destructive if it is not carefully managed. Here are some essential do's and don'ts for smart social media strategy during times of emergency or crisis.

✓ Do	✗ Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct followers only to official channels for emergency information or advice, in most cases this will be <b>emergency.vic.gov.au</b></li> <li>• Be authentic and measured – ensure you have agreed to key messages regarding the safety and operation of your business and staff.</li> <li>• Be consistent with your messaging across all posts, using succinct wording and imagery.</li> <li>• Keep all your social media channels and websites updated with your current business operating status (e.g. opening hours).</li> <li>• Turn off automated or scheduled posts to ensure you are only posting timely and considered messages.</li> <li>• Make sure you are not running any ads/paid content that opposes the current emergency situation.</li> <li>• Provide your followers with alternative ways to support you, e.g: how to purchase your retail items in places not affected by the emergency, let them know that making bookings with you for another season will support the recovery of your business.</li> <li>• Be exact about the time and place of any imagery that is used with a post – using an image from a different location or a different time to the context of your post can cause significant confusion or harm.</li> <li>• Consider how you will encourage future positive interactions with your audience, once the emergency has passed, to ensure they quickly re-engage with your business.</li> <li>• Remain positive and thankful as much as possible. This will minimise the work you'll need to do to address a social media backlash or influx of enquiries and requests.</li> <li>• Check message wording and type of posts being published by official channels to help guide your own messaging and posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't post disturbing images from the emergency situation – your followers may already be experiencing high levels of concern or anxiety. Disturbing images may be harmful to the health of your audience.</li> <li>• Don't direct blame towards anyone/anything – there may be unknown factors contributing to the emergency. If you are proven wrong, such posts will come back to bite you very hard. Once you post something, it can potentially be online and traceable forever. Even if you delete a post, someone may have screen-captured it.</li> <li>• Don't argue, be defensive or mean-spirited. If necessary, take conversations offline – encourage a direct message or a phone call.</li> <li>• Don't use wording or imagery that may suggest the situation is worse/different than it is.</li> <li>• Don't elaborate unnecessarily. Keep it simple and stick to the knowns.</li> <li>• Don't expect everyone to see every post you publish: depending on the size of your audience, average reach rates (how many of your followers see your posts) for organic content is generally low. Therefore, you need to consider that people may not have seen your previous posts.</li> <li>• Don't post messages externally without making sure your employees know about it first.</li> <li>• Don't mix messaging or posts across business and personal social media accounts. Inappropriate messages sent from the wrong account can be embarrassing and costly to put right.</li> <li>• Don't use sarcasm – it never translates over social media.</li> <li>• Don't go rogue! While it's important to be flexible during a crisis situation, your posts shouldn't deviate from other key media messaging. Work together with regional leaders, your community and fellow businesses to ensure the whole region can recover as fast as possible.</li> </ul>