

# New Lifelines:

## Empowering First Responders in the Social Media Era

When Hurricane Florence battered the Carolinas, social media acted as a lifeline for first responders and citizens alike. First responders were able to see where the storm was hitting the hardest and which areas needed help quickly, while the public was able to track storm conditions and communicate their whereabouts to friends and family.

Dataminr Alert:  
HURRICANE  
WARNING



*Hurricane Harvey is the first disaster where social media calls for help appear to have supplanted the overloaded 911 call systems.*



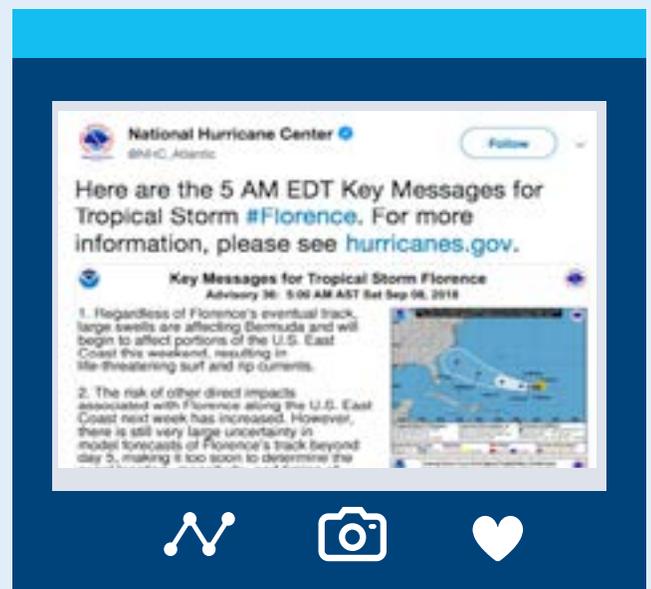
A simple post, or direct message can have a significant impact on rescue operations. When Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico in 2017, survivors used apps when the storm destroyed phone lines and wireless cell sites.



Social media platforms have been working to make the information posted on these sites helpful during emergencies. Safety check features, for instance, let users mark themselves safe.



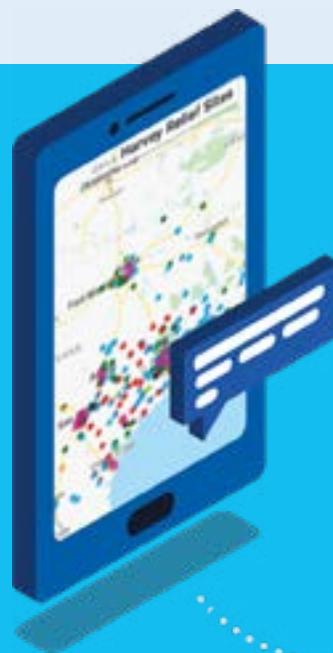
Social media posts are more than a comfort for loved ones. First responders rely on posts in addition to 911 calls to aid in response and recovery efforts.



## User-to-User Connections: Online Collaboration

**Available information is a useful way for people on the ground to help each other.**

- The 2017 San Diego Wildfires' wiki was created when the region was ravaged by wildfire to track the fires' progress in real time and aggregate news.
- An online relief map created during Hurricane Harvey allowed victims to drop a pin and request help, mapping out resources, aid, shelter, and volunteer opportunities.



## Organizing Information Chaos

As more and more citizens turn to social media as a means of communication during natural disasters, first responders can often face an information overload. **It is imperative that first responders have the information they need to rapidly respond to citizen needs.**