

Unit 5: Writing Workshop



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Unit Objectives

- **Describe different public information written products**
- **Apply effective news release writing guidance**
- **Adapt or repurpose written media products for social media**



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Types of Written Products

External Products –
Materials produced
for media and public
consumption

Internal Products –
Materials produced
for internal use only



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External Products

- Statements
- News releases
- Fact sheets
- Media advisories
- Web and social media products
- Public Service Announcements
- Newsletter articles
- Brochures, fliers, and other handouts

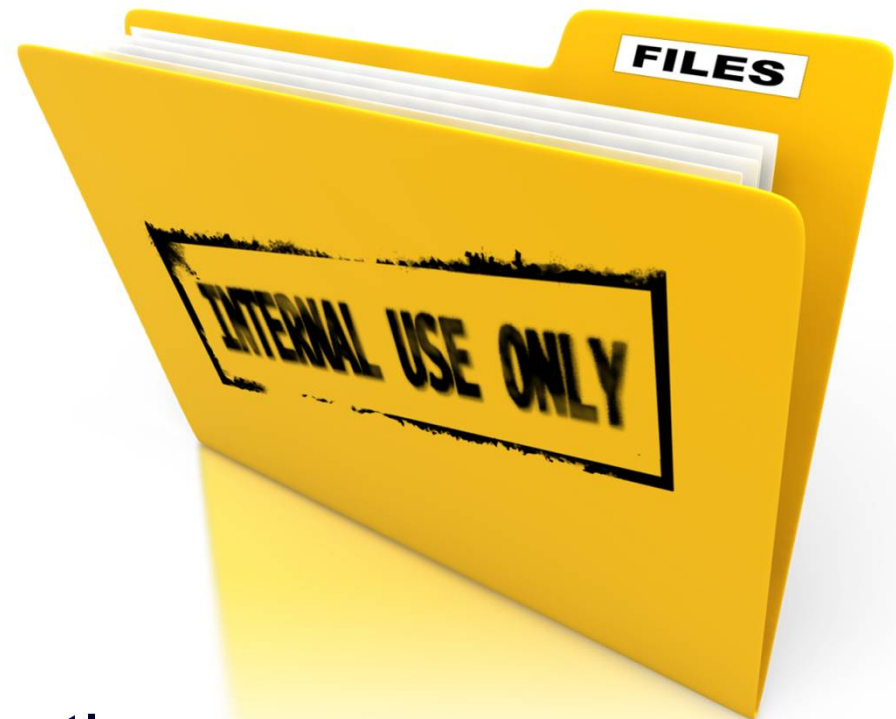


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Internal Products

- Key messages
- Talking points
- Other written products not meant for public consumption
 - Position papers
 - Operational/tactical backgrounders
 - “Back-pocket” information



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News Releases

Organize the facts. Open with a strong lead. Answer Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions



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Talking Points

- Short, easy to understand statements that reinforce your key message
- Brief, one- or two-sentence answers to basic questions that might be asked
- Memorable statements that make your audience visualize your main point
- Quotable
- Written for the ear, not for the eye



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Activity 5.1: Writing an External Product

Instructions: Read news release assigned to your table and discuss the following:

- Delete any information that does not belong
- Reorder the information and edit as needed
- Rewrite in the appropriate style

Purpose: To apply basic news release writing guidance to sample products

Estimated Time: 20 minutes



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Approval Process

Approval process for news releases:

- Helps ensure information going out is accurate, up to date and complete
- Documents the process; tracks what went out, when and who approved
- Keep the information focused on a single topic for faster approval



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Dissemination Process

Identifying the channels:

- Target media—creating and maintaining the list
- Social media handles

Creating the system:

- High-tech and low-tech
- Backup systems
- Updates



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Tracking Process

What is **coming in**?

- Information (including media monitoring and analysis)
- Requests (internal and external audiences)

What is **going out**?

- News releases
- Briefings and interviews

How do you track efficiently?

What records do you keep?



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Writing for the Web

- Web sites
- Social networks
- Blogs
- Micro-blogs
- Short-format video scripts



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How People Read on the Web

79% scanned,
only 16% read

Screen reading
is up to 25%
slower

Numerals stop
the wandering
eye

People scan in
an “F” pattern

Readers are
impatient; you
have 3 seconds
to hook them

People like
chunks of
information



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Strategies for Web Writing

- Highlight **keywords**
- Create subheadings
- Bulleted lists
- Use 123 digits
- One idea per paragraph
- Inverted pyramid still applies
- Cut word count by half



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Growth of Social Media

“You are what you share.”

— Charles W. Leadbeater, *We Think: The Power Of Mass Creativity*

“These days, social media waits for no one. If you’re LATE for the party, you’ll probably be covered by all the noise and you might not be able to get your voice across. It could only mean that if you want to be heard by the crowd, you have to be fast; and on social media, that means you have to be REALLY fast.”

— Aaron Lee, @askaaronlee



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What's Next?



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Changes in Media and Public Information

Traditional Media

- One way communication
- Press release
- Passive audience



Social Media

- 24-hour news cycle
- Media access everywhere
- Active audience



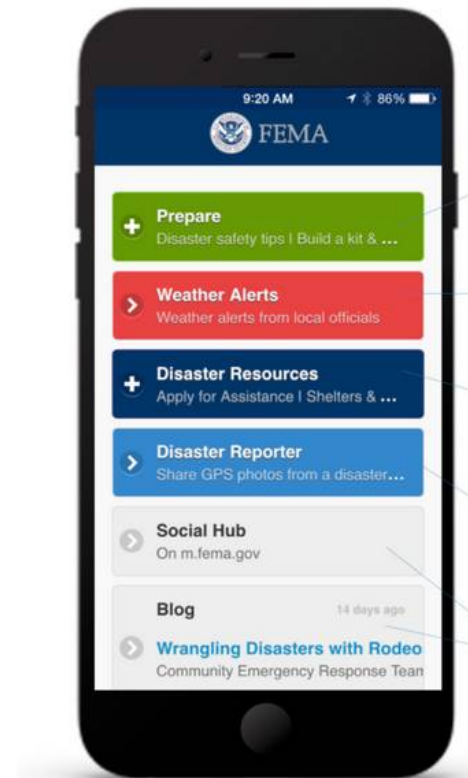
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Social Media in EM

- Decentralized and non-hierarchical
- Usually immediate and available globally
- Multi-channel
- Multiple sources

Mobile App



Social Media Training Resources

Independent Study Course:

- Social Media in Emergency Management
- <http://training.fema.gov/is/>
- Select IS-42

Check your state and local training resources for additional social media training



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Activity 5.2: Make it Social

Instructions: In your table group, review the news release assigned to your table and write:

- 1 Tweet
- 1 Facebook entry
- 1 idea for YouTube

Purpose: To adapt or repurpose traditional media products into Social Media entries

Estimated Time: 15 minutes



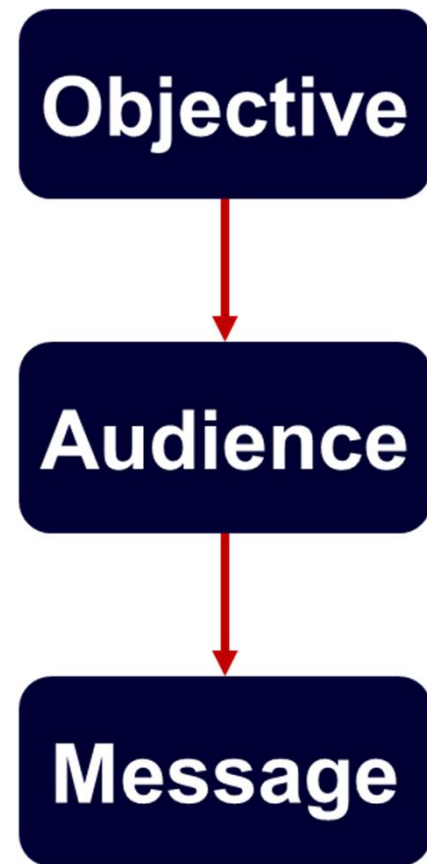
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Basics Concepts Do Not Change

Traditional or social media, the questions remain the same:

- Why are you communicating?
- Who are you trying to reach?
- What will you say?
- How will you say it?



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Bottom Line: Communicate!

- In a crisis, getting the **right information** to the right people at the right time is more important than catching a dangling participle
- Create **simple**, easy-to-use systems to get information products approved and out the door



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Summary

In this unit, we discussed:

- Internal and external written products
- News release writing, approval and dissemination process
- Writing for the web
- Social media in emergency management



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