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FDNY



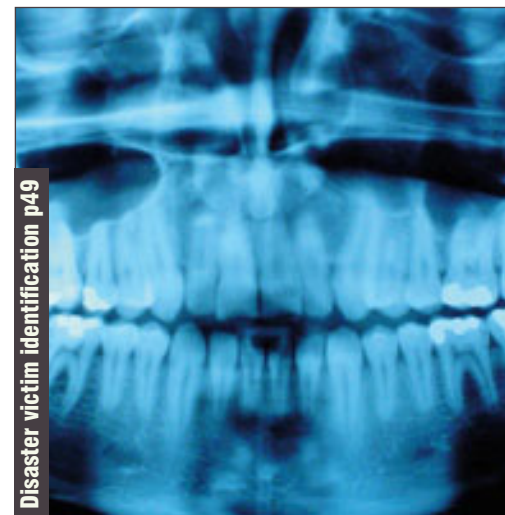
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comment

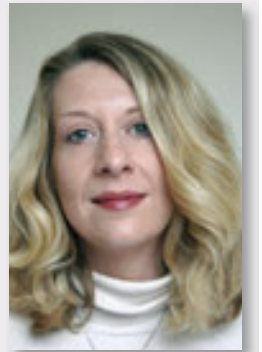
THE TRAGEDY OF the Australian bushfires and the chilling terrorist attacks in Mumbai are very different events, but both have further fuelled interest in the new media evolution – blogs, online social networking (such as Facebook and MySpace, which were used extensively after Hurricane Katrina and during the Virginia Tech shootings) and Twitter.

On page 21, Chris Battle says those who are not harnessing these tools are guilty of letting worlds of communication and intelligence pass them by. He describes how the terrorists in Mumbai utilised freely-available technology to assist them in their attacks, while pointing out that new media does, and will continue to, play an invaluable role for the good in emergency preparedness.

Look at the tweets about the wildfires in Australia. In real time, people shared important warnings and safety information; others provided empathy and support; still others information on evacuation shelters, fundraising and care for animals; there were tweets announcing confirmed fatalities, and people letting others know they were alright; and yes, there were arguments and insults.

In other words, the whole gamut of human urges and responses to a disaster is encapsulated in these messages, effectively showcasing a new tool for societal self-reliance.

Technology is moving fast; it is easy to forget that Facebook is only five years old and Twitter less than two. And the value of new media is evident. But be careful: if emergency communication experts take too long debating how to harness this technology, attempting to formalise it with flow charts and procedural outlines, reporting procedures, outcomes, benchmarks and targets – by the time they look up, the picture will almost certainly have changed again.



Emily Hough
Editorial Director

