

## COVID References for Public Information Officers

References for public information management for assignments affected by COVID-19

These references were provided by Public Affairs staffs and Public Information Officers surveyed before March 31, 2020.

## Virtual Operations

Updates and new technology along with improvements in hardware have allowed for some incident response operations to be done virtually.

Many traditional face-to-face practices have potential to promote spread of COVID-19 requiring reevaluation of operational procedures to prevent virus transmission. Incident operations have traditionally involved meeting in groups or working in close quarters to share information. Information presented below is meant to provide guidance on some of the available tools and tool selection considerations that can promote virtual operations, helping limit virus spread during incident management.

### Available Tools:

Incident responders can consider developing operational capabilities using these tools:

- Enterprise video communications (Zoom, GoToMeeting)
- Live streaming platforms (Periscope)
- Instant messaging systems (Slack, Skype)
- Video teleconferencing or video calling (VTC, Facetime)
- Mobile applications (Wind Ninja, Collector, Google Forms, QR Code Readers)
- AGOL (Story maps, story journals, data sharing and collaboration)
- Government web based applications (EGP, WFDSS, IFTDSS)
- Government/public video feeds, portable incident video equipment

### Tool/Application Considerations

Units will need to define task purpose and need to conclude appropriate tool/applications for use.

- Number in audience and purpose of meeting. Video platforms have participant limits.
- Is there a need to display/share information? Will Agency firewalls limit use or sharing?
- Will other entities such as county agencies or the public be able to access the applications and do the tool/applications have a good feedback loop or ability to comment?

- Use of virtual tools may require time to train and learn. Some tools require multiple presenters to handle presentations and coordination of feedback.
- Can tools/applications record presentations or save data for required documentation?
- Licenses may be limited or need purchased, or passwords require time to acquire.
- Does the tool/application have the ability to encrypt video or data sharing for security?
- Have capabilities been explored for tools/applications we currently have? Are there low tech solutions that could be used that would be effective in a virtual environment?
- What equipment is needed to use the tools virtually and be effective? Cameras, Monitors, portable printers, scanners headsets, hotspots, MiFi.

The tools/applications listed above are not all-inclusive and each unit should continue research to update and improve capabilities. As units develop and acquire applications or processes enhancing virtual work capabilities, collaboration and information sharing will be key to promote safe work solutions as we deal with COVID-19.

Comparison of live streaming services, in no particular order. All programs have free trials.

Program	Cost	Live Stream	Availability	Account Sharing	Special Needs
Be Live -Very Popular	\$30/mo	FB, Youtube	Anyone	Connected to ONE FB account  Maybe create FB profile everyone can access and like every fire page	Initiate with desktop, not mobile (chrome, safari) Guests can be mobile Can refresh, see comments Can schedule-sends FB post/reminder  Records to FB, not comp, can manipulate screens in real time (orientation, make one bigger than the other)
Zoom	\$15/mo/host  \$55/mo to stream	FB, YouTube	Personal/agency accounts	Each person needs an account	Webinar platform is additional \$40 Must have webinar to live stream Video quality Can record to comp  No comments visible
Streamyard		FB, You Tube, Instagram	Anyone		Free-20 hours/mo Broadcast from desktop/laptop, no mobile See comments, schedule post to FB ****Still in Beta testing
Blue Jeans	\$40	FB	Anyone	One account	Has phone number people can call in Limited, \$\$

Program	Cost	Live Stream	Availability	Account Sharing	Special Needs
					Video is framed/squished when side by side
Ecamm Live	\$79 one time	FB, YouTube, Periscope, Twitch			Must have a Mac, tech know how Utilizes skype up to 5 guests Can use pre-recorded video during live
Teams	Free		Anyone with O365	No	
Facebook Multi-person	Free	FB	Currently unavailable	Uses personal account to stream to Group	Limited to personal acct/groups (no pages)
Webex Meet					
Go to Webinar					
				Loola, Webinar Jam, OBS, Wirecast,	Programs that do not have streaming capabilities or too expensive/ high tech

Slightly outdated but close to current info:

<https://communitiesthatconvert.com/best-live-streaming-apps-for-facebook-youtube-periscope-and-instagram-ep-80/>

### Challenges:

- Paying for service
- Be Live: FB account name and who gets login info- It's not a page so you can't just take access away. People that leave the incident would still have the login. Do we only give it to rostered PIOs?
- Access to platform on Gov devices
- Account access for multiple teams on multiple incidents

## Information Links for Virtual Operations

### FireNet365

<https://sites.google.com/a/firenet.gov/www/home/firenet-next-generation>

### NWCG Procedures for Off-Site/Remote Incident Assignments

<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/memos/eb-m-11-013.pdf>

<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms902.pdf>

**Suggested resource order language for ordering a virtual PIO**

<https://bit.ly/OrderSMEMPIO>

**PIO Incident Organizer**

[https://www.nifc.gov/PIO\\_bb/docs.html](https://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/docs.html)

**NWCG Public Information Officer Subcommittee Draft Social Media Guidance & Best Practices for Public Information Officers**

<https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/public-information-officer-subcommittee>

**FEMA Social Media Emergency Management Guidance Tool (includes information on Building a Digital Volunteer Program)**

This Tool is designed to support public information officers, emergency managers, and other individuals supporting crisis communications in developing planning materials for the use of social media in emergency management operations. <https://smemguidancetool.org>

**Virtual Operations Support Group (VOSG)**

<https://vosg.us/active-vosts/>

**Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST) Workbook Template**

<https://www.theredelm.com/vost.html>

**REMOTE – VIRTUAL  
STAFFING MODEL**

We can delete this  
position if need be

**NOTE: All positions are remote OR virtual except where indicated with an \* symbol, those positions will be at either ICP.**