

# Communicating when disaster strikes

If you are anywhere on the Eastern Seaboard you are feeling the effects of Hurricane Sandy (or at least, you are hearing about the effects of Sandy on the nonstop news coverage). You are probably hunkered down at home since few people ventured out to work today. If your job is to communicate, you are faced with a tough situation: you cannot compete for attention! What should you do?

If you already have a **print campaign** running, there is nothing you can or should do. People realize that your ad or press release went out way before the storm.

If you have **TV ad campaign** running, realize that your spots probably won't run. Too much air space will be devoted to hurricane coverage. The issue you will have to face is whether you can continue to use those spots after the storm. Are they still relevant? More importantly, if people are dealing with after-disaster effects, how much impact will your ads have?

If you had scheduled a **press conference**, you should cancel it. Nobody wants to hear about product launches when they are worried about a tree crashing down on their house.

If you handle **communications for a business or organization**—especially a retail operation—you should update your website and social media feeds regarding your status (are you open or closed, do you have power or not, will you honor late payments etc.) You should also record a phone message for your location. Not everyone will have access to the Internet. You may also consider sending emails/SMS messages to customers who may need to reschedule appointments etc.

If you have a **press release** going out this week, you may want to reschedule it. Your news will have to compete with disaster

information.

If you have a **social media campaign** running, first realize that many people may not have Internet access. You may want to postpone your campaign, and certainly, revisit and reconsider any scheduled Tweets, Facebook updates or blog posts. Mary Fletcher Jones of Fletcher Jones has written a very useful blog post: [6 Tips: How Communicators Can Prepare for Hurricane Sandy](#) where she deals with special considerations for social media.

What are you doing to communicate during and after the storm? Please share any insights here.