



# DISASTER RESOURCE GUIDE

## Executive Summary

### Incident Management Software

---

*Current and Future Use in Emergency Management*

Kristen Lovejoy, PhD  
Buffalo Computer Graphics, Inc.  
4185 Bayview Road  
Blasdell, NY 14219  
716-822-8668  
klovejoy@bcgeng.com  
[www.bcgeng.com](http://www.bcgeng.com)

## Introduction

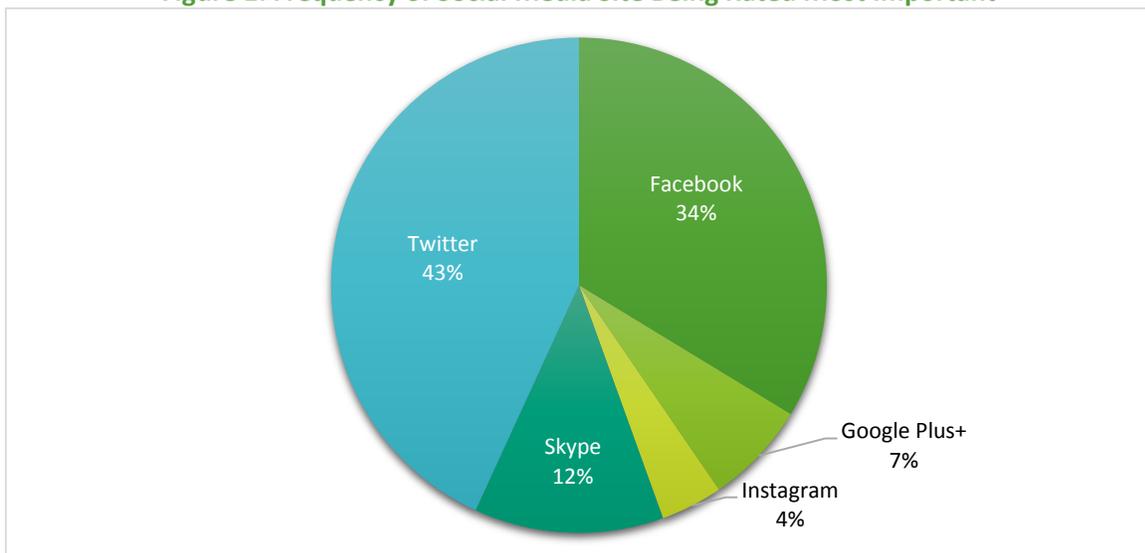
Incident/Emergency Management Software can improve how emergency managers plan for, respond to, recover from, and try to mitigate incidents in their communities. Most emergency managers use one or more software products to perform both routine and incident-specific tasks. Some use a hodge-podge set of software products not specifically designed for incident response, such as using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to keep track of resources. Others have developed dedicated in-house solutions specifically tailored to their workflow requirements. Whereas still others have chosen one of the many Complete-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) incident management software solutions available on the market.

In order to delve into these topics a survey was distributed to the emergency management community through the Disaster Resource Guide. In total 466 participants filled out all or part of the survey. The results of the survey point to the diversity of the emergency management community when it comes to their thoughts on emergency management software. The study particularly focuses on the increasing importance of integration with social media, the use of mobile devices in the field, opinions on cloud based solutions, training and exercise options, integration of the software into daily operations, interoperability issues, and important factors and deterrents for purchasing and utilizing emergency management software. This summary will briefly go over the main conclusions of the survey.

## Results

Although some emergency managers do not believe integration with any social media is necessary, most agree that the two most important social media sites for emergency management are Facebook and Twitter.

**Figure 1: Frequency of Social Media Site Being Rated Most Important**



The hot-topic issue of cloud based solutions is of particular importance in the field of emergency management. Participants agree that the biggest concern when it comes to cloud based solutions is security.

**Table 1: Important Factors to Consider**

Open-ended Response	Count
Security	69%
Reliability	41%
Availability	41%
Accessibility	14%
Ease of Use	8%

When it comes to training on emergency management software, users prefer methods that allow them to train on their own time, such as online training courses and step by step instructions. They also want access to “live” help when they need it, such as a technical support helpline. Overall users would like to see more engagement from emergency management software vendors during their exercises, particularly to assist them with technical support.

**Figure 2: Vendor Participation in Exercises**

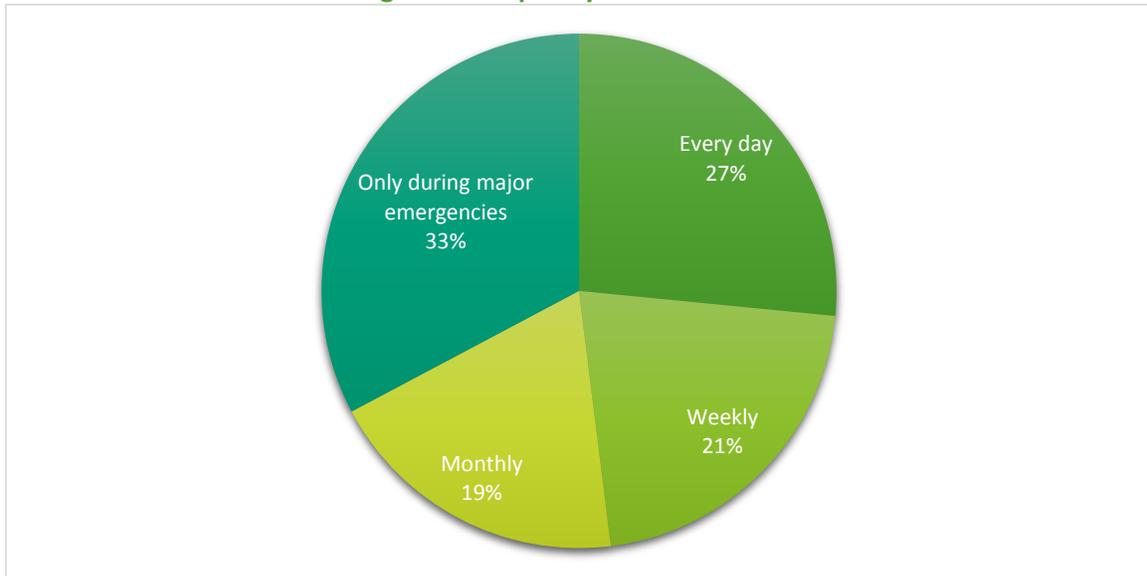


In terms of integrating the software into daily operations, although most agree it is important in theory, not many are doing it in practice; see below.

**Table 2: Importance of Integrating Software with Day-to-Day Business Operations**

Level	Percent
Extremely important	27%
Very important	38%
Moderately important	21%
Neutral	7%
Slightly important	4%
Not at all important	1%

**Figure 3: Frequency of Software Use**



This is a problem since the more familiar staff are with the software the more efficiently it can be used during an activation. It falls on both the vendor and the user to do a better job of integrating the software into daily operations.

Interoperability amongst different stakeholders is crucial during an incident, because of this the US and Canada have implemented several different standards and protocols for interoperability. The ability for emergency management software to comply with IPAWS and CAP standards is seen as crucial.

Compliance with ICS provisions and standards is also seen as essential for emergency management software. An additional factor listed as important in evaluating emergency management software is its ease of use. As might be expected, the biggest factor preventing emergency managers from purchasing a system is monetary concerns.

## Conclusion

This paper shows that there are many factors to consider when purchasing and utilizing emergency management software. There are several different COTS solutions available on the market, many of which can be customized to meet the specific needs of an organization. In-house solutions or fully customized products are also feasible options to consider. In the end there is no one-size fits all solution that is best for all organizations. It is important to investigate all options and see which software will best fit into an organization. Once a system is chosen, finding ways to integrate the software into daily operations, instead of setting it aside for just emergency use, is essential for fully preparing staff to utilize the software when it is most needed.

For more details on the survey, please see the full white paper at [buffalocomputergraphics.com/IMS-survey](http://buffalocomputergraphics.com/IMS-survey)