

# Beyond the Screen: Enhancing Public Safety Communication through Diverse Channels

In today's digitally driven world, public safety agencies increasingly rely on social media as a key tool for engaging with the community.

By: Tamrin Olden  
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In an age dominated by digital interactions, public safety agencies often turn to social media as a primary channel for communicating with the community. While platforms like **X (formerly Twitter)**, **Facebook**, and **Instagram** offer immediate outreach, a sole focus on these channels can pose significant risks, especially when issues such as technical glitches, platform outages, or misinformation arise.



*"Public safety is all about timely and accurate information dissemination. If a reliability crisis occurs within these platforms, agencies must be prepared with alternative methods of communication to maintain public safety and trust. Diversifying communication channels is crucial for ensuring consistent outreach, especially in emergencies."*

**Tamrin Olden**  
CEO, TOC Public Relations

### **1. Press Releases and Traditional Media:**

Press releases remain a time-tested method for distributing information. Public safety agencies can effectively reach various news outlets by crafting clear and concise statements regarding critical incidents. Traditional media—TV and radio—still plays a significant role in disseminating information quickly and widely. During emergencies, media can serve as a source that can relay timely updates to the public, ensuring that vital information reaches those who do not regularly engage with social media.

### **2. Community Engagement Events:**

Engaging the community directly through town halls, safety events, and information sessions helps build trust and strengthens relationships, essential for effective communication during emergencies. During these events, public safety agencies can provide essential safety information, updates on local issues, and opportunities for community members to ask questions. This face-to-face interaction creates a support network that can be relied upon during emergencies, ensuring that residents know where to turn when they need information.

### **3. Text Messaging Alerts:**

Text message alert systems allow agencies to communicate critical messages directly to individuals who have opted in to receive updates. These systems deliver timely updates on emergencies, traffic, and safety tips, ensuring quick communication without relying on social media. This straightforward communication method is highly effective and ensures that vital messages reach those in immediate need. **Everbridge** is a good solution for text alerts.



#### 4. Newsletters:

Newsletters are reemerging as another valuable tool for public safety agencies to communicate effectively with the public, offering a reliable alternative to social media. By distributing regular e-newsletters, agencies can share vital news, information, updates on public safety initiatives, and tips for community members in a structured format. Newsletters allow for deeper storytelling and context that can enrich the public's understanding of safety measures and resources available to them. By incorporating newsletters into their communication strategy, public safety agencies can ensure that essential information reaches all segments of the community, including those who may not actively engage with digital platforms.

A dark blue newsletter sign-up form for the San Joaquin County Probation Department. At the top, it features the text "SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY" in small white letters, "PROBATION" in large, bold, yellow letters, and "DEPARTMENT" in smaller white letters below it. To the right is a gold and blue star-shaped badge with a globe in the center. Below the header, the text "San Joaquin County Probation" is written in white. Underneath, a white line of text reads "Stay up-to-date with the SJC Probation Department by subscribing to our newsletter." The form contains three white input fields for "First Name", "Last Name", and "Email". At the bottom, there is a gold button with the word "SUBSCRIBE" in white capital letters.

#### 5. Partnerships with Local Organizations:

Collaborating with local organizations, such as schools, non-profits, service clubs, and neighborhood associations, can enhance communication efforts. These organizations often have well-established networks for distributing information to their constituents. By leveraging these partnerships, public safety agencies can expand their reach and ensure that important messages find their way to diverse demographics within the community.

While social media plays an important role in public safety communications, relying solely on it can be risky. The rapid evolution of communication channels requires agencies to embrace a more holistic approach, utilizing a blend of traditional methods, direct engagement with the community, and reliable alert systems. By diversifying communication strategies, public safety agencies can safeguard outreach efforts and maintain public trust, no matter the challenges.



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamrin Olden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Tamrin Olden**  
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