

Meet the Virtual Social Media Working Group Series: Cheryl Bledsoe, Chief Boyd, Kris Eriksen, and Chief Werner

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Recognizing the need to address the challenges associated with social media for emergency response and public safety, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) established the Virtual Social Media Working Group (VSMWG). The group's mission is to provide recommendations to the emergency preparedness and response community on the safe and sustainable use of social media technologies before, during, and after emergencies.

Drawn from a cross-section of subject matter experts from local, state, , and federal responders from across the United States, VSMWG members are establishing and collecting best practices and solutions for the Nation's first responders and the emergency preparedness and response community.

Members of the VSMWG were selected based on their experience in leveraging social media technologies to pursue the missions of their agencies. Many VSMWG members have served as speakers, trainers, and subject matter experts at major homeland security-related workshops, roundtables, and conferences on the topic of social media.

This post is the first in a series of articles which will include the biographies and photos of each VSMWG member. For more information and to participate in ongoing discussions with the group, please join DHS First Responder Communities of Practice at www.communities.firstresponder.gov.

Cheryl Bledsoe, Division Manager, Clark [WA] Regional Emergency Services Agency

Since 2006, Cheryl Bledsoe has been the Division Manager of Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, and is responsible for implementing the agency's social



media footprint including policy development and managing blogs, Facebook Fan pages, and various Twitter profiles. Cheryl is active in local and national communication issues and emerging technologies.

She is the 2012 President of the Washington State Emergency Management

Association, speaks regularly at conferences, consults with government agencies, and provides training to diverse audiences. She also chatters frequently on the #SMEM (Social Media and Emergency Management) hashtag and administrates www.sm4em.org, which collates activities from a national perspective. She loves using this technology for outreach and engagement.

Bill Boyd, Chief, Bellingham [WA] Fire Department

Chief Bill Boyd is considered one of the thought leaders in the field of using social media for crisis communications and response. He is a 30-year fire service veteran, with almost all of those years with the Bellingham Fire Department. Chief Boyd was hired in 1983, and has served as a firefighter, firefighter/paramedic, paramedic captain, fire captain, public information officer, and assistant fire chief before his formal promotion to fire chief in 2004.



The First Responders Group Bulletin is a publication sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate. The First Responders Group Bulletin discusses technologies of interest to first responders that have received funding, in part, from the government. Mention of these technologies should not be construed as an endorsement of either the technology, or the entity producing it, by the federal government.

Meet the Virtual Social Media Working Group (continued)

Chief Boyd also serves as Bellingham's Emergency Services Director. In this role, he overhauled the city's emergency management and disaster plans in 2001 after a horrific hazardous material release and fire that killed three boys and created an ecological disaster whose effects are still felt in the community. Chief Boyd also served as a the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Type III All Hazards Incident Commander for a regional incident management team, and has extensive experience in managing large-scale emergencies and planned events using the Incident Command System.

Chief Boyd also is an early adopter in the use of social media in crisis response and has written and lectured across the country as a champion in using social media tools for situational awareness, messaging, and engagement during crisis.

Kris Eriksen, Public Information Officer, Portland National Incident Management Organization, US Forest Service



Kris Eriksen has worked in the fire services for more than 28 years and joined the Portland National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) team in May of 2008, working with National Forests and their stakeholders to improve pre-season

collaboration and communication. She has extensive experience in journalism and public relations for a variety of corporations, worked in hospital marketing, and owned her own public relations and graphic design agency which expanded to teach fire and emergency preparedness. She is a strong advocate for the use of social media in public safety, and has taken the lead in NIMO for promoting the use of social media related to fire incidents.

Kris has been deployed with the Alaska Type 1 Incident Management Team, as well as other National Type 1 and 2 teams, responding to many of the Nation's largest wildland fires and all-hazard assignments. She was responsible for creating the first multi-agency Fire Information website (NMFireinfo.com) in New Mexico in 2006. She successfully set up and ran a two-state, multi-jurisdictional Joint Information Center during the largest fire siege in Georgia/Florida history in 2007, and worked with the FEMA Region 10 Public Affairs Cadre for six years handling public information and media functions during floods, tornados, earthquakes, and hurricanes nationally.

Charles Werner, Fire Chief, Charlottesville [VA] Fire Department



Chief Charles Werner is a 38-year veteran of the volunteer and career fire rescue service, with 34 years served in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he presently serves as the fire chief for the city. He has received local, state, and national awards and accolades for his work in the area of public

safety communications, technology, and leadership, and serves on several boards and committees, focusing on technology and public safety, including the DHS SAFECOM Executive Committee, the Virginia Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee, the National Alliance for Public Safety GIS Board of Directors, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs Technology Council.

Chief Werner is a nationally-published author with more than 90 published articles and serves on the editorial advisory boards for *Firehouse Magazine*, *Firehouse.com*, and *Urgent Communications*.