



Mass Violence Incidents and Social Media: A Guide to Hashtags

Hashtags are typically created to provide support to survivors and communities affected by MVIs, grouping all social media posts using the tag in one location.

- ⇒ Following an MVI, hashtags can also be used to spread unreliable and unverified rumors.
- ⇒ Caution should be taken in viewing social media hashtags as reliable sources of information about the MVI.
- ⇒ Hashtags can often be extremely helpful in guiding MVI victims and survivors to support and assistance.
- ⇒ There is no standardized process for creating and spreading social media hashtags.
 - For example, after the bombing at the Boston Marathon in April 2013, a number of hashtags quickly emerged to share information, to offer collective support to the city of Boston and MVI survivors, and to link people to longer-term support and services:
 - ▷ #BostonStrong
 - ▷ #PrayForBoston
 - ▷ #BostonHelp
 - ▷ #BostonResilience
- ⇒ It's helpful for MVI crisis responders to immediately create social media hashtags that can “trend” across multiple on-line platforms and provide timely and reliable information.
 - For example, as the Route 91 Harvest Festival mass shooting occurred, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department immediately published news and updates on social media:
 - ▷ #LVMPDnews
 - ▷ @Sheriff_LVMPD
 - These social media hashtags and handles then provided timely and accurate information about the MVI, warned people to stay away from the MVI site, and then provided information about victim/survivor assistance resources available at the Response Center and, later, the Family Assistance Center.



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