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Social media and high impact weather communication in Basque Meteorology Agency

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The Basque Meteorology Agency (Euskalmet) has among its responsibilities severe weather warning issue, this information is the basis that Basque Government Civil Protection authorities use to establish alerts in the territory and to disseminate to the Basque population different recommendations.

Euskalmet, as other Meteorological services, use different “classical” tools for meteorological information dissemination, including web, mail and SMS. In 2011 Twitter is adopted as an efficient tool for mobile-phone meteo-information dissemination based on text messages of up to 140 characters. Since that time this tool has evolved to a real online mobile-phone social network.

The first Twitter message was issued from Euskalmet on June 2011, more than 11000 "tweets" are send since that time. Today Euskalmet has more than 14000 followers (more than 5% Basque Population). It should be noted that besides anonymous users, professionals from different sectors including public and media are widely present. Twitter’s usage spikes during high impact weather events

Today this system has become an effective tool for real-time information transmission to users, allowing direct bidirectional contact (experts-followers) without intermediaries. Euskalmet experts not only provides forecast and other remarkable information routinely but gives real-time observed data, forecast and relevant information continuously before and during severe-weather episodes.

In this work we will review some aspects of the system implementation and use, both from the point of view of information providers and users. We also include some examples of Twitter procedures on the context of some severe weather episodes.