



## Emergencies in the age of socials

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Penetration of social networks in society modified several aspects of life in developed countries. Even the management of emergencies was affected by this technological and behavioral deployment. The main reason for this variation relies in the fact that through socials and in general through web 2.0 tools, information does not need to be conveyed by mass media (e.g., television and newspapers) but, in principle, every person can release warnings or watches of events. Quite often, moreover, mass media harvest news or emergency alerts from socials (twitter among others). The main effect of this “Copernican revolution”, is that institutional services have to run after unofficial alerts and, sometimes, their role is that to confirm or prove them wrong. In many cases and for several reasons, it seems hard that institutional services might “win” the challenge to be the first to issue a warning and, if this trend will continue, probably efforts and resources should be invested in developing tools not to be the “early bird” but to reduce false and missed alarms.

Another aspect that deserves attention is that of uncertainty and probability. After a long and in some cases fierce route, probability and uncertainty were accepted in institutional bulletins released for common users and, in some case, they began to be used correctly. The advent of socials and of web 2.0 tools, with their intrinsic need of succinctness, damped this virtuous increase in popular awareness. Efforts should be spent to rearrange the concept of uncertainty and probability.

A least aspect related to the use of social networks within the frame of emergencies relies in the so called “self-fulfilling prophecy” effect. In fact, if alerts can be issued by common people thanks to web 2.0 tools, common people can fulfill them in the same way. Of course, socials cannot “produce rain” without precipitations or pollution without stagnation, but they can increase people sensitivity then increase the perceived magnitude of events.

These reflections sprung out from the experience achieved in atmospheric pollution episodes and severe weather management in Friuli Venezia Giulia.