

Emergency calls tweeted by Seattle Police



As local governments and authorities strive to improve relations with the public, we've already seen social media used as [a platform for citizens to voice their comments and complaints](#). However, a recent experiment to engage with the public saw the [Seattle Police Department](#) take an unusual approach, by tweeting emergency calls and revealing to followers "a day in the life of the Seattle Police" via Twitter.

Over a 12 hour period nearly all emergency calls — except those relating to domestic violence, child abuse or sexual assault which were deemed too sensitive — were tweeted at an average of 40 tweets per hour, totaling 478 by the end of the day. Police spokesman, Sean Whitcomb, said that the department was trying to find new ways to engage with the public, and encourages SPD Twitter followers to show interest in emergency calls, and hear what the police are telling news reporters. The exercise was met with a mixed response, with some followers annoyed when apparently trivial and mundane tweets clogged their Twitter accounts, while others commended it for being "cool". As a follow up, the city police have also launched a "tweet-along", giving followers the chance to "ride virtual shot-gun with officers" as they send Twitter updates on every call they respond to.

Twitter is a great way to engage with an audience and to add an element of transparency to operating practices and procedures. Inspiration here, then, particularly for large corporations and government bodies that are considering opening up to the public.

Website: www.seattle.gov/police

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