

After Idaho Firefighter Tragedy, a Wake-Up Call for Local Governments on Social Media

CiviSocial urges cities to shift from reactive PR to authentic storytelling as online anger turns deadly in wake of Idaho firefighter killings.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL, UNITED STATES, July 1, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the wake of yesterday's tragic killing of firefighters in Idaho, allegedly at the hands of an individual who expressed hostility toward local government on social media, one organization is calling on municipalities to rethink how they communicate with the public online.

“

It's become essential that local governments connect the dots... show how firefighters, police officers, parks workers, and librarians are ordinary people, not part of some conspiracy!”
Sam Toles, Founder CiviSocial

CiviSocial, a mission-driven firm that helps local governments build trust through more authentic social media engagement, says the tragedy underscores a dangerous reality: unchecked negativity and misinformation online can have real-world consequences.

“This is not just a communications issue. It’s a safety issue,” said Sam Toles, founder of CiviSocial. Toles is one of the nation's foremost experts in Social Media, as former CCO of Bleacher Report, former General Manager of the Vimeo platform, and former Head of Digital and New Platforms for MGM Studios. He is also a former City Council Member who retired from his media career to focus on helping local governments navigate this critically important arena. “The people in our Local Governments are neighbors serving neighbors. It's so important for these agencies to showcase that their employees are real, kind, and caring people. When we fail to show the human side of government, the consequences can be catastrophic.”

Rather than relying on traditional public relations tactics or expensive marketing agencies, CiviSocial works directly with public employees to create and share their real stories — the kind that remind residents that behind every small government there are neighbors, public servants, and frontline workers doing their best.

“People don’t connect with flyers or formal press releases anymore. In so many communities, there really isn't any local news to cover the human story. It's become essential that local governments connect the dots... show how firefighters, police officers, parks workers, and

librarians are ordinary people, not part of some conspiracy! That's how we rebuild trust," said Toles.

Launched in June of 2024, CiviSocial has partnered with more than a dozen cities and counties across the country — red states and blue states alike — helping them reframe their digital presence to reduce backlash, strengthen community bonds, and even pass tax and bond measures with broad public support.

"Local governments don't need to flood social media with more Canva flyers," Toles added. "They need to give their employees permission to be human — and a framework to tell that story responsibly - using a casual, video-first approach. That's how we disarm the growing hostility and rebuild connection."



This approach has some basis in how both the FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit and the Behavioral Science Unit have long taught that hostages who share names, family stories, or humanizing details are statistically more likely to survive. By using social media to humanize those in government, CiviSocial is hopeful its mission will not only increase public participation and civic engagement, but also prevent future tragedies.

About CiviSocial

CiviSocial is a social media consultancy built specifically for local governments. Founded by former city council member and renowned digital media expert Sam Toles, the firm empowers municipalities and counties to build trust with their communities through real stories told by real people. The firm's one-time, one-week high-impact training and strategies program transforms how cities and counties connect online.

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