



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Journalism and Mass Communications

February 15, 2016

Letter of Invitation for Interview

Dear Communication Manager:

You are being asked to participate in a research study because of your role as PR or communication manager working for a government agency or public works department. We selected you because your organization took an active and relevant role in communicating during the flood, using social media in order to convey information to publics and interact with mass media.

The purpose of this research is to understand the role of social media during emergency management and disaster relief. In particular this study focuses on the role of Twitter and other social media platforms as used by government official and public sector agencies and organizations as part of a crisis management communication activity during the massive flood that affected Columbia and several regions of South Carolina in October 2015.

We would need **only twenty minutes** of your time for an in-depth interview that will be conducted among state officials and public relations specialists in order to advance our understanding of strategic social media use for emergency management. The interview will be conducted in person, by telephone, or using a VoIP service, such as Skype, and it would be scheduled at your convenience. The confidential interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to assist with data analysis, in accordance with the highest ethical standards for the protection of human subjects.

This study is conducted by Dr. Alessandro Lovari, visiting scholar at University of South Carolina and Dr. Shannon A. Bowen, Professor, University of South Carolina. It is a private, non-funded research study in which we will keep your personal name and identifying factors confidential, but we would report the main insights at a PR conference in early March and in a journal publication (such as *the Journal of Public Affairs* or other PR journals).

We will provide you with copies of the abstract and article(s) that result from the research if you would like to have it. Any other questions can be addressed to Dr. Bowen at sbowen@sc.edu and

scheduling interview matters can be addressed to Dr. Lovari at lovaria@mailbox.sc.edu or (765)337-7163.

We look forward to receiving your reply and the possible availabilities for scheduling an interview time. Your observations can help improve future disaster preparedness and communication in our community.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Best regards,
Dr. Alessandro Lovari, Visiting Scholar, USC
&
Dr. Shannon Bowen, Professor, USC