

07 July 2022

Media Release

SOUTH AFRICA ADOPTS ISO STANDARD TO GUIDE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EMERGENCIES

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), through its technical committee has adopted the ISO 22329 standard that provides guidance on the use of social media during an emergency or crisis. The standard underwent a public enquiry stage and was adopted and published as a South African National Standard (SANS) 22329 in June 2022.

“The need for guidelines in using social media to help South Africans during times of emergencies and crises is critical. With the recent floods in Kwa Zulu-Natal, the July 2021 riots and national state of disaster during Covid-19, the sharing of authentic information can literally save lives. Social media has the potential to deliver information to large groups of people, quickly – however there is also the risk that if it is not managed correctly, it can cause more harm. SANS/ISO 22329: Security and Resilience – Emergency Management – Guidelines for the use of social media in emergencies, provides the guidelines in using social media when dealing with emergencies, crisis situations or even potential threats to the public,” says Jodi Scholtz, Lead Administrator of SABS

Scholtz explained that SANS/ISO 22329 should be implemented by every corporate and public institution in South Africa. The standard sets out the guidelines for organisations to ensure that they have strong strategies, plans and personnel in place to deal effectively with situations as they arise. SANS/ISO 22329 is the first standard in South Africa that provides a framework for organisations and the public to interact, disseminate information and provide critical information during emergencies such as security, climate, health or any incidents that has an impact on citizens.

“Coupled with the risk of fake news and misinformation, there has been an increased use of social media channels in the last few years. Organisations and citizens that rely on social media need to be aware that every digital social media channel is ‘owned’ by organisations and impose their own terms of use and privacy guidelines. SANS/ISO 22329 provides practical guidelines that outlines the responsibility of organisations’ to ensure that content is verified, planned and monitored. The benefits and risks of reaching stakeholders via social media is outlined in the national standard and SABS believes that every organisation should refer to this standard in the compiling and implementing communication strategies,” says Scholtz.

SANS/ISO 22329 can be implemented very easily as the framework for implementation is provided. The document contains various Annexures that provide information and guidelines. Annexure A of the document provides information on the type of social media and related channels that currently exist; Annexure B provides a quality management checklist for content that is being posted and monitored; Annexure C presents an example of a plan to disseminate content before, during and after an emergency; and Annexure D provides guidelines to citizen's on using and interacting with social media.

SANS/ISO 22329 (2022): Security and Resilience – Emergency Management – Guidelines for the use of social media in emergencies is available for purchase via the sabs webstore.

Ends.

Issued by:

Roshelle Pillay; Media Relations; 061 030 0133; Roshelle.pillay@sabs.co.za