

# **Maximizing the Impact: The Role of Social Media and the Public Information Officer in the Fire Service**

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Travis County ESD No. 6



# Why This Topic Matters

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- 1 Critical role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) in managing communication
- 2 Growing reliance on social media for real-time information
- 3 Public expectations for transparency and engagement

# Purpose of This Presentation

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To demonstrate how a dedicated PIO and a strong social media presence enhance a fire department's visibility, trust, and communication efforts, especially during emergencies.



We must provide the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make an informed decision.

# Learning Objectives

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Recognize the key responsibilities of a PIO.

Understand the importance of social media in the fire service.

Learn best practices for social media strategy and execution.

Develop a plan to align communication efforts with the fire department's goals.

Explore techniques for managing crisis communication effectively.

# What is the Role of a PIO?



A Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for interfacing with the public, media, and other agencies to provide accurate, accessible, and timely information related to incidents. The PIO gathers, verifies, coordinates, and disseminates information on the incident's cause, size, current situation, and resources committed, serving both internal and external audiences. Additionally, the PIO monitors public information and handles inquiries from various stakeholders, including the media and elected officials.

Source: FEMA



# Key Responsibilities of a PIO

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- Can serve as the official spokesperson for the department
- Manage social media accounts and public messaging
- Crisis and strategic communicator
- Brand and image manager



# Key Responsibilities of a PIO

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- Develop communication strategies
- Ensure accurate and timely dissemination of information during crises
- Train staff and leadership on media interaction



# Key Responsibilities of a PIO

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## Other Duties as Assigned

Videographer	Photographer	Graphics Creator	
Media Relations	Website	Relationship Builder	
Education and Outreach	Liaison	Video Editor	
Creative Director	Storyteller	Reporter	Advocate



# Key Responsibilities of a PIO

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Videographer

Photographer

Graphics Creator

Media Relations

Website

Relationship Builder

Education and Outreach

Liaison

Video Editor

Creative Director

Storyteller

Reporter

Advocate



# Develop a Communication Plan



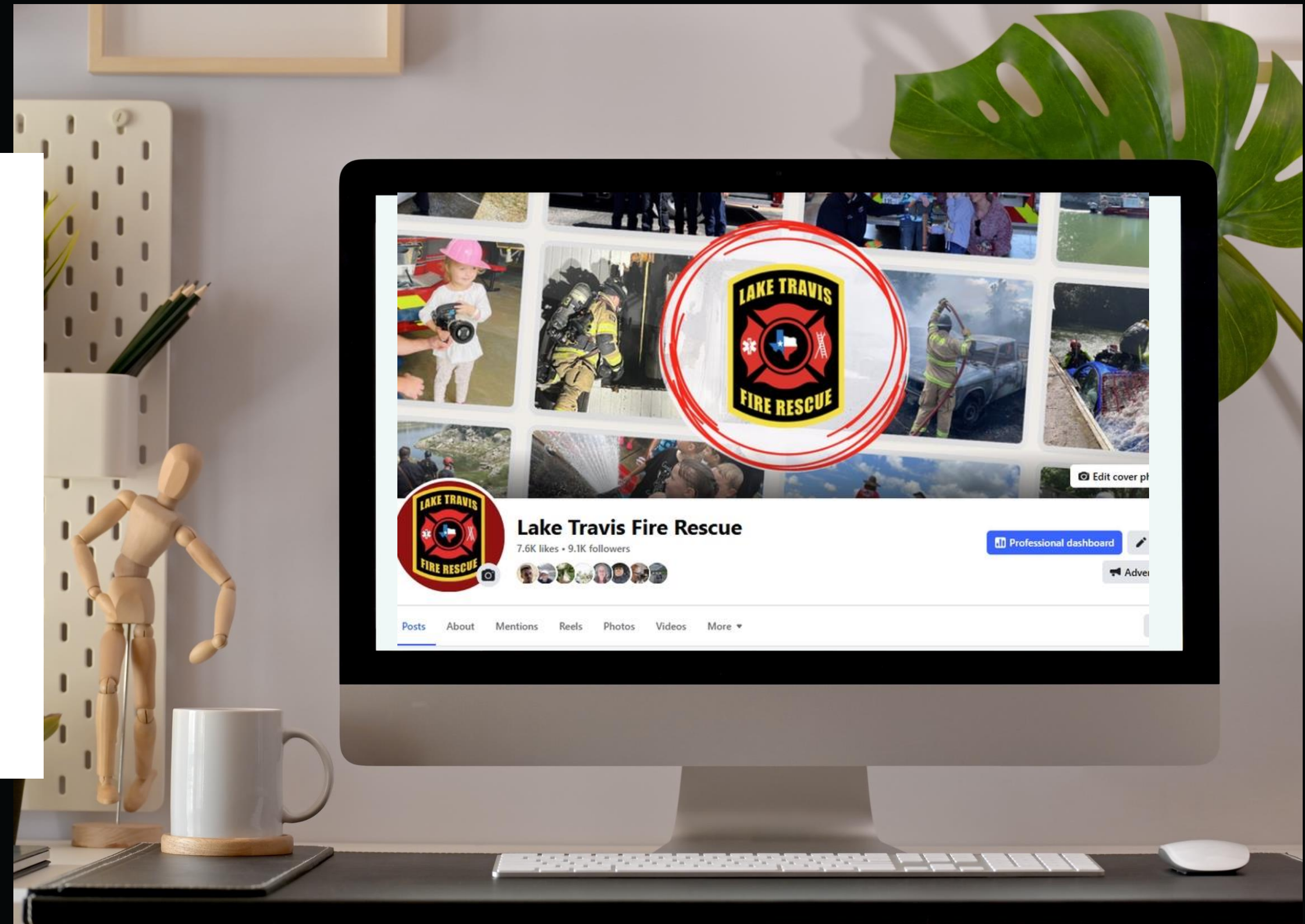
# Developing a Communication Plan

- Situational analysis
- Goals and objectives
- Key messages
- Tools and platforms
- Metrics for evaluation



Ensure your communication plan is fully integrated with your department's strategic priorities, financial framework, and overarching mission, vision, and goals to create a cohesive and effective messaging strategy.

# The Role of Social Media





# Why Social Media is Critical?

- Instant dissemination of information
- A platform for public education and engagement
- Building trust through transparency
- Managing public perception and department reputation

# Social Media Strategy



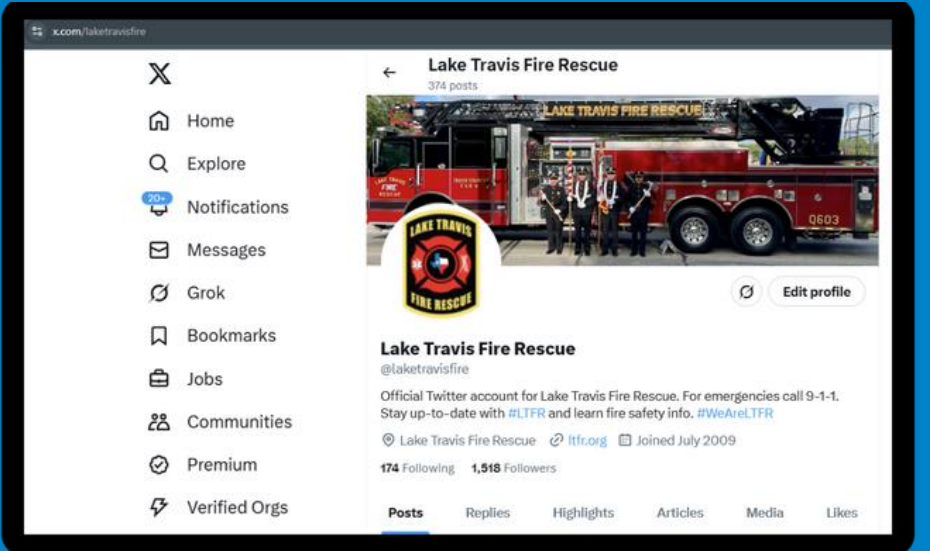
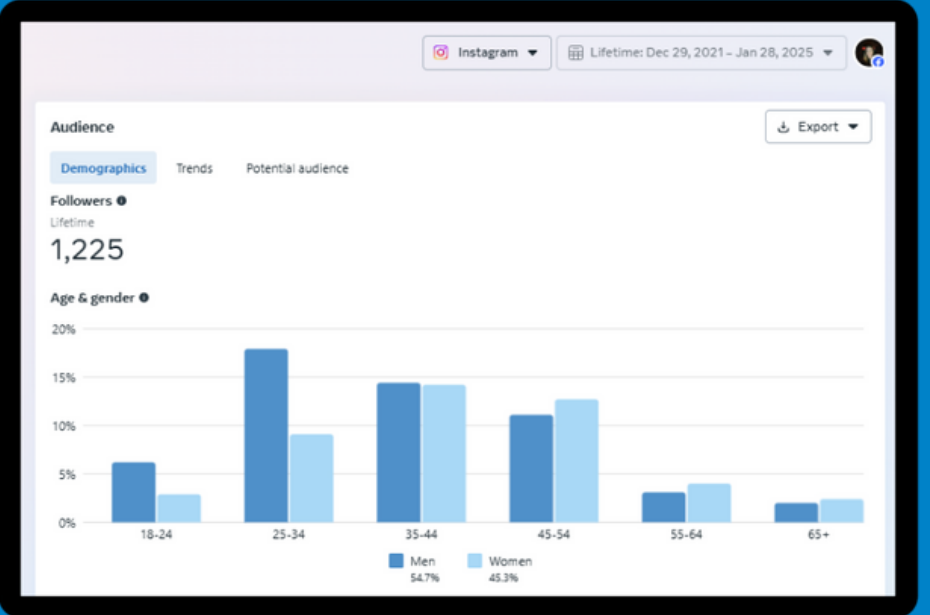
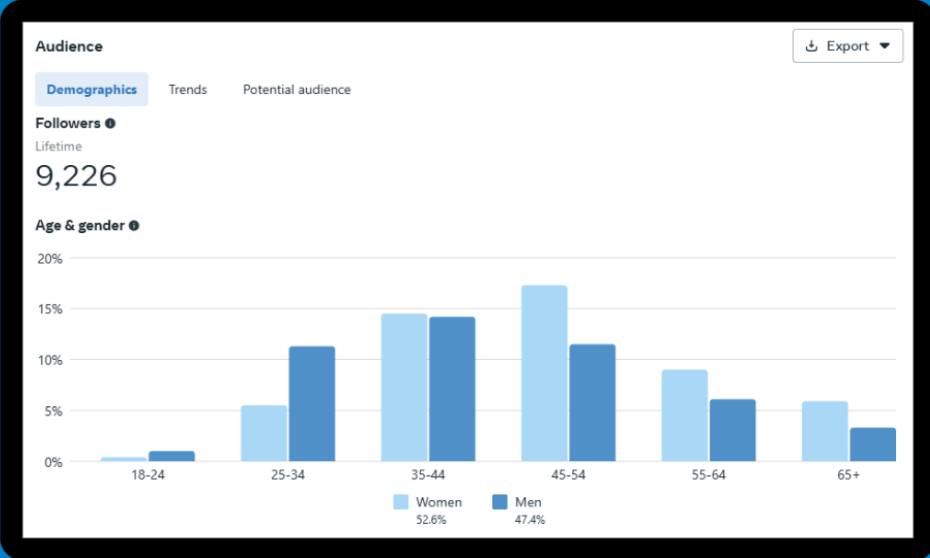
# Building a Social Media Strategy

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- 1 Define clear goals (education, engagement, crisis response).
- 2 Identify target audiences.
- 3 Create a content calendar.
- 4 Use analytics to measure success.
- 5 Incorporate multimedia (videos, graphics, live updates).

# Target Audiences

Who's on What Platform?



# Target Audiences

Why is this important?

	Ages 18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Facebook	68	78	70	59
Instagram	76	66	36	19
LinkedIn	40	41	30	15
X (formerly Twitter)	38	25	15	8
Pinterest	43	43	33	22
Snapchat	65	32	14	4
YouTube	93	94	86	65
WhatsApp	30	40	28	18
Reddit	46	35	11	4
TikTok	59	40	26	10
BeReal	10	2	1	<1

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 1-June 10, 2024.

	Men	Women
Facebook	61	78
Instagram	44	55
LinkedIn	35	30
X (formerly Twitter)	25	17
Pinterest	19	51
Snapchat	23	31
YouTube	87	83
WhatsApp	28	32
Reddit	28	20
TikTok	26	39
BeReal	2	3

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 1-June 10, 2024.

# Create a content calendar.

## MONTHLY CONTENT CALENDAR

## SOCIAL MEDIA

January

February

March

April

May

June



### Theme

New Year -- Resolve to be prepared

### Messages

Clean Gutters when taking lights down.

New Year -- Make a Plan Include Family and Pets

Get all your documents together.

### Theme

Learn to Love Preparedness Messages

Register for Warn Central Texas

[STEAR Program](#)

Warming Fires/Camp Fires

### Theme

Spring Cleaning

### Messages

Burn Piles

What is it?

How to get a permit?

How to properly Burn?

### Theme

Spring Cleaning/Home Improvement Messages

Replacing Deck/Fence with Non-Flammable Materials

New Landscape -- Consider Zeroscape/Xeriscape

Important Docs for Emergency Kit -- Tax Day  
\*Tax Free Emergency Supplies -- April 27-29

### Theme

Spring Cleaning

### Messages

Clean Back Yard

5 Foot Buffer around House

Replace Repair Shingles

Decks --- Clean and maintained

Trim Trees

Wildfire Preparedness Day -- May 4, 2024

### Theme

What is?

### Messages

Burn Ban

Red Flag

High Fire Danger

## MONTHLY CONTENT CALENDAR

## SOCIAL MEDIA

July

August

September

October

November

December



### Theme

Wildfire Prevention

### Messages

Fireworks Safety and Wildfires

Camping and Campfires

### Theme

Wildfire Prevention

### Messages

Equipment Usage

Cigarettes

Illegal Burning

### Theme

Preparedness Month

### Messages

Notifications

Evacuation Plan

Pet Preparedness

### Theme

Fire Prevention Month

### Messages

Fire Safety Messaging for Fire Prevention Month -- Follow NFPA Guidance

### Theme

Help First Responders

### Messages

Ensure address is visible to first responders

Mark Driveways and Entrances:

Trim Vegetation Along Access Routes

### Theme

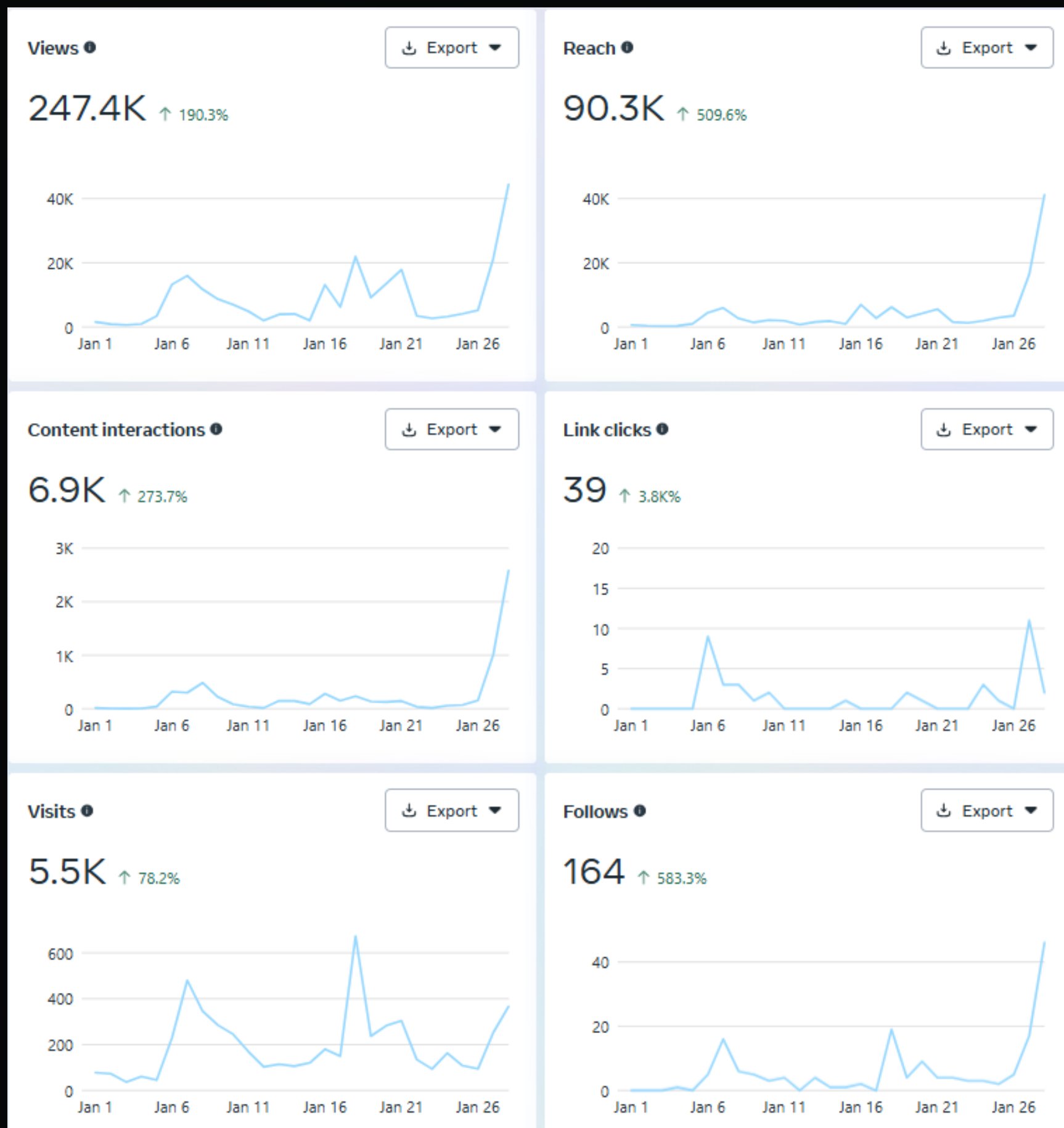
Holiday Decorating and Wildfire Prevention

### Messages

Wire Mesh on Attic Vents to prevent embers from entering

Proper disposal of real Christmas Trees

Clean Gutters when putting up lights.



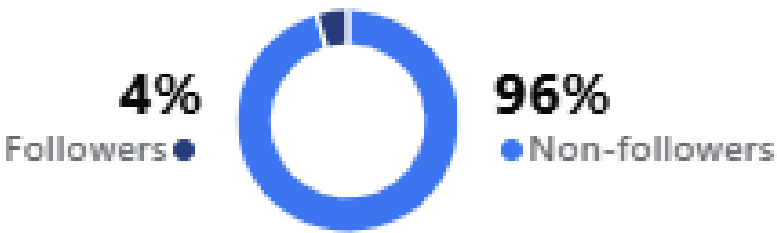
# Use analytics to measure success.

# Example of Social Media Post with Analytics



## Views

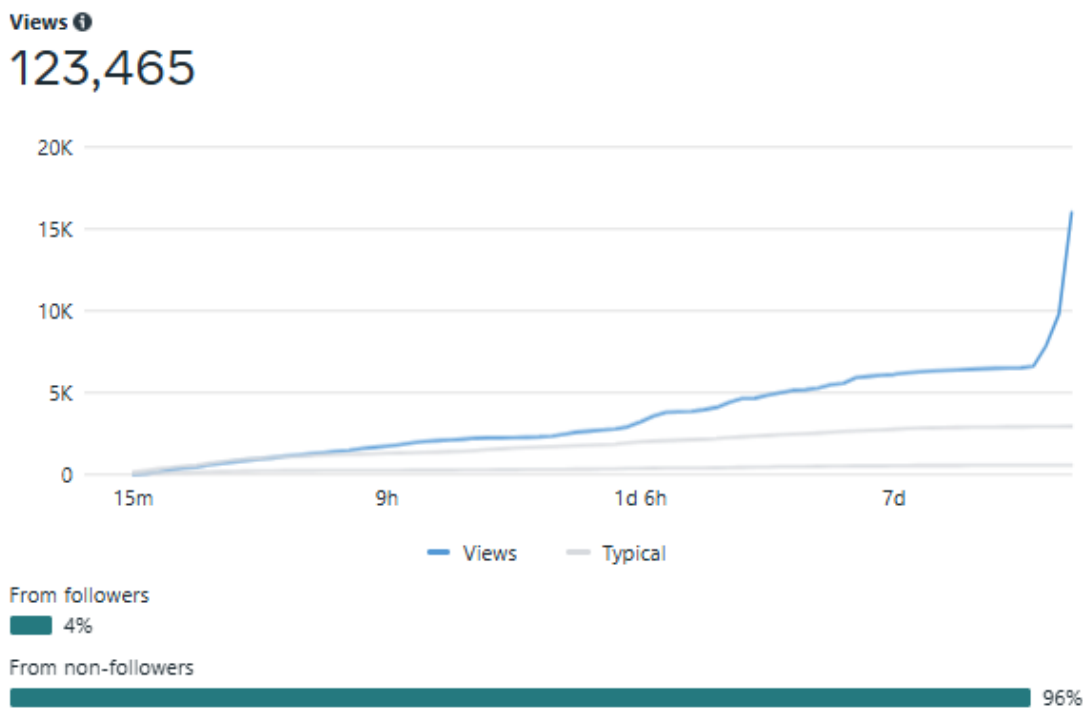
Followers vs. non-followers



## Overview

Views ⓘ	Reach ⓘ	Interactions ⓘ	Watch time ⓘ
123,465	96,789	5,425	11d 6h

📈 This reel received more views compared to your recent Facebook reels.




📈 This reel received more interactions compared to your recent Facebook reels.




Interactions ⓘ	Reactions ⓘ	Comments ⓘ	Shares ⓘ	Saves ⓘ
5,425	4,348	292	764	21

# Top Content for 1st Quarter



 Goats to the Rescue in Steiner...



Mon Jan 6, 9:44am

 123.5K    5.3K  
 544    764



March 16 - the Crabapple Tree Fire i...

Sat Mar 15, 1:16pm

 43.4K    310  
 94    71



Update: the family cat was found by...

Sun Mar 23, 8:36pm

 34.6K    442  
 29    6



March 22, 4:45 a.m. — Bee Cave Parkway is...





Fri Mar 21, 8:52am

 25.6K    114  
 43    31















Lake Travis Fire Rescue responded t..



Sat Jan 18, 8:09am

 22.1K    146  
 20    15

# All Content for 28 Days

Title		Date published 	Reach 	Likes and reactions 	Comments 	Shares 	Interactions 
 March 16 - the Crabapple Tree Fire is 40% contained, please follow Incident Inform...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Mar 15, 3:16pm	17.5K	104	38	71	216
 Update: the family cat was found by firefighters inside the home and reunited with...  Photo 	Boost	Sun Mar 23, 10:36pm	14.2K	129	6	6	143
 March 22, 4:45 a.m. — Bee Cave Parkway is open. 8:30 p.m — gas has been turned...  Photo 	Boost	Fri Mar 21, 10:52am	8.7K	63	23	31	118
 Last night (April 2), LTFR crews responded to a kitchen fire in the 12900 block of HI...  Photo 	Boost	Thu Apr 3, 7:30am	8.1K	81	5	0	86
 LTFR firefighters responded to a residential structure fire at approximately 1:00 a...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Mar 15, 3:35am	7.6K	70	7	4	81
 Lake Travis Fire Rescue recently hosted an Elevator Emergency Management class, ...  Photo 	Boost	Fri Mar 28, 7:00pm	6.1K	48	3	2	53
 LTFR firefighters along with crews from Pedernales Fire Department, Ce-Bar Fire D...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Apr 5, 11:19pm	5.5K	110	3	0	113
 Lake Travis Fire Rescue crews responded to an RV fire near Running Deer Trail and ...  Photo 	Boost	Wed Mar 26, 4:22pm	4.6K	51	3	0	54
 March 22, 4:45 a.m. — Bee Cave Parkway has reopened following a gas line break L...  Text 	Boost	Sat Mar 22, 4:59am	3.3K	31	1	3	35
 Stay weather aware today! We're hopeful our area will get some much-needed rai...  Photo 	Boost	Thu Mar 27, 9:37am	2.6K	17	1	1	19
 RED FLAG WARNING IN EFFECT 🚩 The National Weather Service has issued a ...  Photo 	Boost	Wed Mar 12, 7:00am	2.2K	8	0	11	20
 RED FLAG WARNING IN EFFECT 🚩 The National Weather Service has issued a ...  Photo 	Boost	Tue Mar 11, 1:30pm	2.2K	16	0	8	24

# All Content for 1st Quarter

 Goats to the Rescue in Steiner Ranch!From January 4–10, 2025 (weather permit...  Reel 	Boost	Mon Jan 6, 11:44am	96.8K	4.3K	292	764	5.4K
 March 16 - the Crabapple Tree Fire is 40% contained, please follow Incident Inform...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Mar 15, 3:16pm	17.5K	104	38	71	216
 Update: the family cat was found by firefighters inside the home and reunited with...  Photo 	Boost	Sun Mar 23, 10:36pm	14.2K	129	6	6	143
 March 22, 4:45 a.m. — Bee Cave Parkway is open. 8:30 p.m — gas has been turned...  Photo 	Boost	Fri Mar 21, 10:52am	8.7K	63	23	31	118
 Sometimes the job isn't just about fighting fires—it's about lending a hand to thos...  Photo 	Boost	Thu Jan 16, 6:00pm	8.5K	117	6	10	134
 Lake Travis Fire Rescue responded to a multi-vehicle fire in the 4500 block of FM 6...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Jan 18, 10:09am	7.7K	103	9	15	127
 LTFR firefighters responded to a residential structure fire at approximately 1:00 a...  Photo 	Boost	Sat Mar 15, 3:35am	7.6K	70	7	4	81
 Update 4:13 p.m.- The fire is now under control. Crews will remain on scene for an ...  Photo 	Boost	Fri Jan 31, 2:58pm	7.4K	52	5	7	64
 Lake Travis Fire Rescue recently hosted an Elevator Emergency Management class, ...  Photo 	Boost	Fri Mar 28, 7:00pm	6.1K	48	3	2	53
 Notice of Prescribed Burn Tomorrow 📢 Nature Conservancy is conducting a p...  Photo 	Boost	Mon Feb 24, 6:51pm	5.8K	16	1	25	42
 2.19.2025 at 11:05 PM Update: Crews remain on scene working to extinguish hot s...  Photo 	Boost	Wed Feb 19, 7:10pm	5.7K	62	8	2	73
 Critical Fire Danger for Tuesday, March 4 (tomorrow) 🔥 Critical fire danger is a...  Photo 	Boost	Mon Mar 3, 6:00pm	5.6K	23	1	9	33



# Incorporate Multimedia

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2.3↑

Enhanced Engagement: Social media posts with visuals receive 2.3 times more engagement than those without.

40↑

Increased Sharing: Visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media than other types of content.

10↑

Higher Interaction Rates: On Twitter, posts with videos receive 10 times more engagement than those without.

64%

Improved Purchase Decisions: 64% of consumers make a purchase after watching branded video content with graphics.

Source: Sprout Social



# Top Content Formats

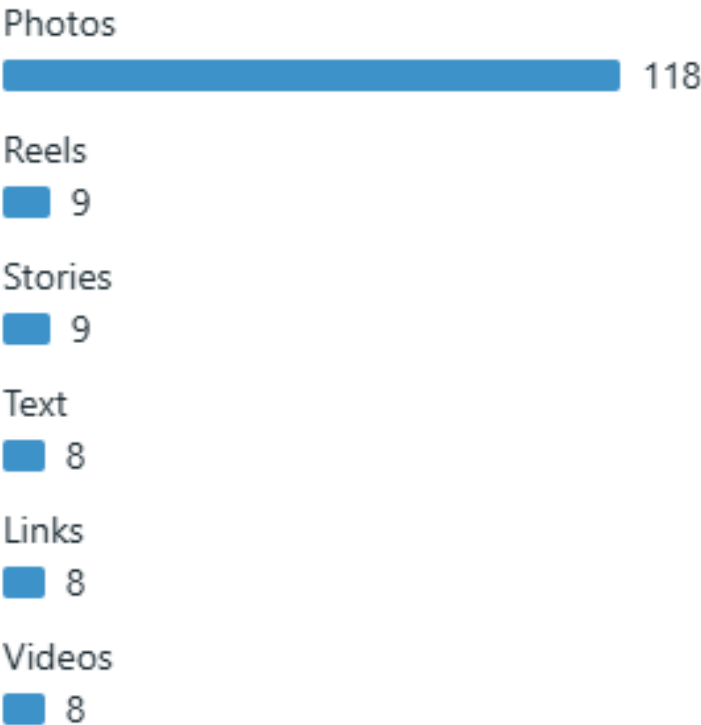


## Top content formats

### Published content ⓘ

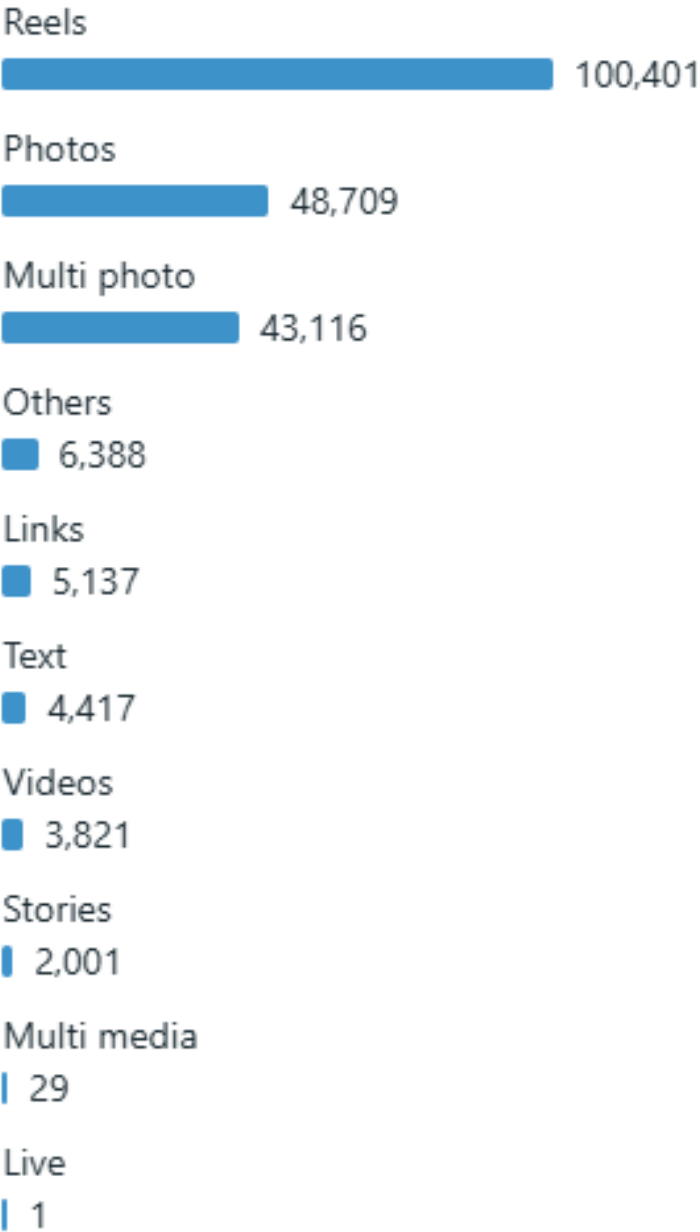
Based on up to 200 pieces of content

+23.1% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024



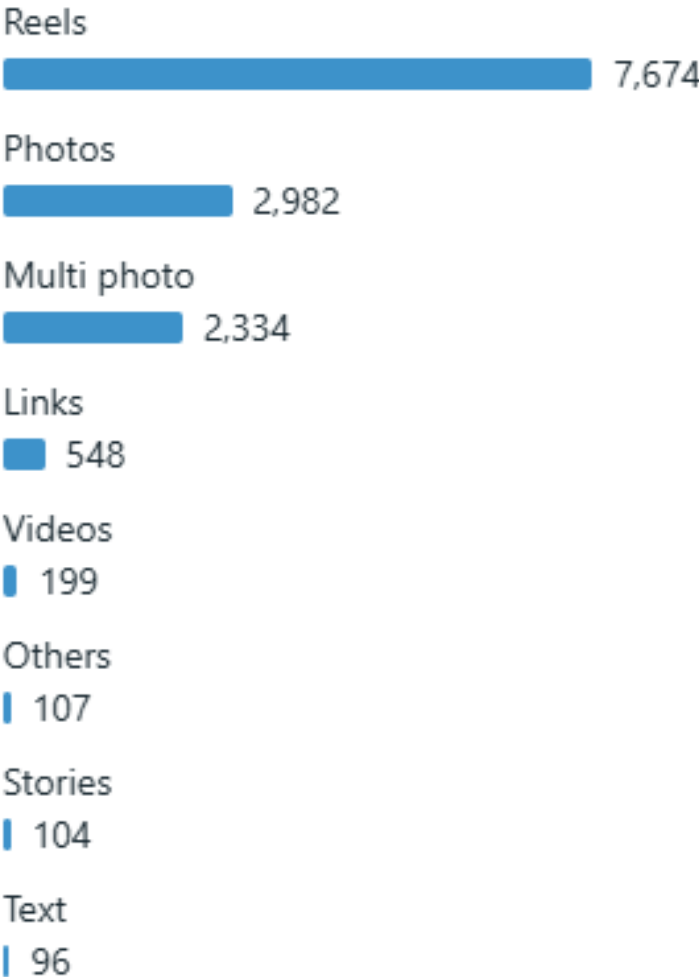
### Facebook reach ⓘ

+311.7% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024



### Content interactions ⓘ

+144.7% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024



LAKE TRAVIS  
FIRE RESCUE

## Top content formats

### Published content ⓘ

Based on up to 200 pieces of content

+23.1% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024

Photos

118

Reels

9

Stories

9

Text

8

Links

8

Videos

8

### Facebook reach ⓘ

+311.7% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024

Reels

100,401

Photos

48,709

Multi photo

43,116

Others

6,388

Links

5,137

Text

4,417

Videos

3,821

Stories

2,001

Multi media

29

Live

1

### Content interactions ⓘ

+144.7% vs. Oct 3, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024

Reels

7,674

Photos

2,982

Multi photo

2,334

Links

548

Videos

199

Others

107

Stories

104

Text

96

# Best Practices for Social Media



# Do's and Don'ts

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## Best Practices for Social Media

**Do:**

- ✓ Stay consistent
- ✓ Use plain language
- ✓ Use multimedia
- ✓ Respond to inquiries promptly

# Do's and Don'ts

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## Best Practices for Social Media

### Don'ts

 Share unverified information

 Engage in arguments

 Ignore misinformation

 Forget about accessibility

# Crisis Communication



# Managing Emergencies Effectively

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- ✓ Establish a single source of truth for updates.
- ✓ Prepare templates for common scenarios.
- ✓ Monitor misinformation/disinformation and address it quickly.
- ✓ Collaborate with local agencies for unified messaging.

# Overcoming Challenges

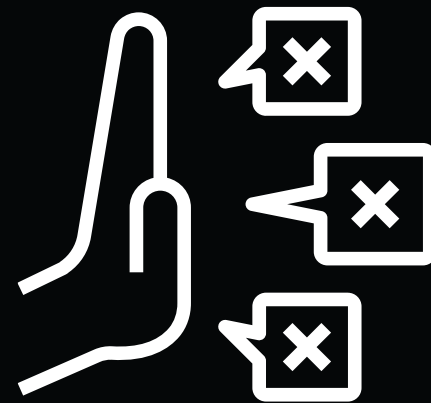


# Common Barriers

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Limited resources (time, staff, budget)



Resistance to change



Managing misinformation

# Solutions

- Prioritize training and cross-functional support
- Leverage free tools and platforms
- Build partnerships with local media and stakeholders
- Funding
- Shared services



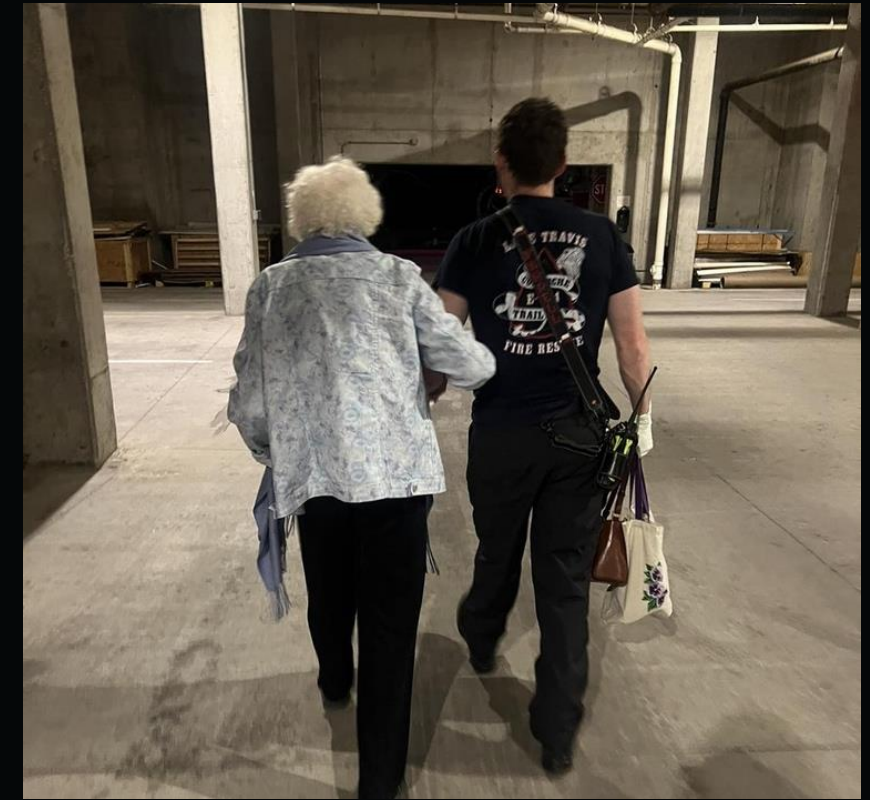
# Takeaways



# Key Points to Remember

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- Social media is essential for fire departments.
- A dedicated PIO enhances communication and helps build trust.
- Proactive planning and best practices ensure success.
- Real-time updates and crisis communication save lives and reputations.



# Questions?



# Thank you!

Effective communication is not just about sharing information; it's about building trust and creating connections that make a lasting impact.



**Rachel Neutzler**

