



## Aide Memoire for Facebook Admins concerning safety and security issues

The following has been put together to help Admins of various Facebook groups and pages dealing exclusively, or in part, with safety and security issues, which may be posted from time to time. There has recently been an increase in groups (for instance concerning rural fires) and from our own experiences in dealing with safety and security subjects, we understand the responsibilities and pressures this brings.

Done well, a great deal can be achieved – done poorly, however, despite the best of intentions, lives can be put at risk!

The following we hope can help you in getting the best from all your endeavours and hard work. This includes the experience gained by Associação Alerta de Incendio Florestal, who we have consulted, concerning donations and other support they give to the Voluntary Bombeiros.

Please take a few minutes to read the following:

1. For safety reasons, it is vital to quote sources when sharing safety and security alerts or information. It is preferable to use sources officially approved by the Portuguese Government to avoid confusion and panic.
2. Verification is particularly important as sometimes, false information may have cascading effects by which mass media sources also contribute to the dissemination of the false information in question. Always evaluate and consider the reliability of the information you receive and its source – can you trust it? If you are not sure of your information: report that the information you are spreading is unverified or not validated.
3. Facebook groups and pages supporting active emergency situations should be free of political bias and exaggerated language. A professional and calm administration and moderation is vital to ensure safety.
4. It is an offence in Portugal, in most circumstances, to share a photograph of someone in a public forum without permission. In an emergency it's important to be sensitive to the photos you allow to be posted on your group, even when they don't contain images of people. As administrator, consider whether the photos are likely to be helpful or cause panic.
5. When posting photos or videos of fires taken at a distance, be aware that they may not always be an accurate indicator of the exact current position of the fire due to smoke carried by high winds that has spread many kilometres. Atmospheric and cloud conditions are also a factor and can distort the actual situation. The way an image has been captured, also has a bearing. It is useful for photos to be accompanied with a caption of the time it was taken and the photographer's location and direction shown.
6. If you haven't already done so, in an active support period concerning public safety, for example during an active fire, consider temporarily placing a "Pending approval" setting

on your group posts so you can judge whether they should be posted and approve prior to public view.

7. Compile a list of useful official sources of information. Share them at appropriate moments during emergency situations and also in quiet periods between any such situations. Ensure your group members are aware of where to look for better understanding, so they are better prepared for any emergency.
8. As an official Civil Protection Volunteer Organisation under Portuguese law, and designated as a Utilidade Pública by the Council of Ministers in the area of civil protection and security, Association Safe Communities Portugal has a wealth of information on its website developed with the help of government, which is available to everyone, some parts in multiple languages. Please feel free to share this. Regarding advice concerning donations please contact Associação Alerta de Incendio Florestal.
9. Make sure you have more than one administrator or moderator for your group. During an emergency, agree when you will be available to answer questions and offer support to your group members. If you are not happy with a moderator's way of managing a situation, talk to them and review group practice to ensure the security of group members.
10. Be aware that not every group member may be an honest upright citizen. An emergency is unfortunately an opportunity for exploitation and an opportunity for crime. Be sensitive to this when collecting for instance evacuation lists, disclosing information about who has evacuated and where they have gone etc. A Facebook group may have opportunistic criminals looking on and moderators need to keep a watchful eye on their group members when they are in a vulnerable position. Encourage your group members to use private message for private conversations concerning arrangements to help each other during emergencies.
11. Be watchful for bogus fundraising activities. Ensure only bona fide links for monetary support are posted. Avoid adhoc "Gofundme" or "Justgiving" links.
12. Finally, people get very upset and sometimes angry in emergency situations. Sometimes, they just need a calm, sympathetic and supportive response and a well run group or page will offer this for them.
13. When setting the rules for your group please feel free to include references to the above as you consider appropriate for your page.

We hope that you find the above helpful.

David Thomas

President

Associação Safe Communities Portugal

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