Description of the safety check feature of the LastQuake app

Social media has changed the way disasters are managed and responded to (D3.1). One of the best illustration is how Facebook changed crisis response (Wired, 2016). When a disaster strikes, a common need is to contact relatives in order to check on their safety. Facebook enabled its users to do so via the Safety Check. Launched for the first time after 2015 Nepal earthquake, this tool enabled users in the disaster area to mark themselves as "safe". The information was then accessible to all their contacts. EMSC developed its own safety check system for LastQuake users. This tool is not meant to compete with Facebook, but to complete it in areas of the world where other social media may be preferred (see D3.1), to reach non-social media users and to offer an alternative in case of limited bandwidth. Indeed, LastQuake safety check is based on SMS, which has been found to be an efficient and resilient way to communicate after a disaster (Canadian Red Cross, 2012; Kaigo, 2012; James, 2014). Sending an SMS is indeed a good way to reassure friends and family without using too much bandwidth, a precious resource in time of emergency. The tool has been adapted to special constraints linked to the type of disaster and the diversity of users. Safety check only give information about people that are able to mark themselves safe (technically and physically), and furthermore, decide to do so. For all earthquakes of magnitude 4.5 and above, EMSC determines the area the expected peak ground acceleration (PGA) was high enough to frighten the inhabitants, i.e. where the shake was the most violent. We only consider the LastQuake users whose geolocation falls within this area and send them the safety check notification. This safety notification is to be distinguished from the regular LastQuake notification that alerts users in a wider area about the earthquake. For instance, after the M5.7 in Central Italy (18 January 2017), 51237 users received the regular LastQuake notification about the earthquake and only 19 users received the safety notification which enabled them to send the safety check SMS and to consult directly the safety tips (Figure 9). Indeed only users who potentially felt a violent quake are targeted for the safety notification. The others still have the opportunity to use the safety check feature directly via the app.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Communication, Social networks, Access and use of infrastructure/services
Disaster Phases: Response
Types of Actors Concerned: Non-active citizens, NGOs
Hazards: Natural hazards

Source

Deliverable D3.3b "Final report on the impact of best practices prototype implementation" (page 23)