

# BEHIND THE SCENES: THE STORY OF A CRISIS COMMUNICATION EXPERT

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April Davis stands in front of Oregon Department of Emergency Management sign located in Salem, Oregon on March 12, 2024.

**W**ith a background in military communications as a reporter, April Davis offers a unique perspective the Public Affairs Officer focusing as a Digital Media Strategist for the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM).

Growing up, Davis found her passion for news media and journalism writing through her high school journalism class and helping with the school's yearbook. She earned her degree in journalism from the University of Idaho. Davis has been with the OEM for about three and a half

years with a true dedication every day for her career.

Davis spends about 80-90% of her time building pre-crisis messaging and social media templates. Her goal is to create a culture of preparedness for all Oregonians. Oregon is at the most risks for earthquakes, tsunamis, and wildfires. Through print and online media and supporting partner agencies, Davis thrives to ensure everyone is aware of the potential disasters in Oregon.

Davis focuses on the digital media part of her position and

oversees Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly known as Twitter) for the OEM. The agency does not have an Instagram account, but she hopes to create one this year. All of the accounts are linked together with other state agencies and counties. Therefore the same message can be sent out across multiple platforms to reach a larger audience.

"Digital media is the bread and butter for the agency. When an incident happens, I'm immediately on social media on all of the various platforms to communicate directly with the public," Davis said.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), social media plays a vital role in crisis communication as the number one practice of raising public awareness about a risks or crisis. Other important practices social media plays in a crisis situation is early warning notifications and improving overall preparedness.

Davis describes her career in public affairs as **“PRACTICALLY ANYTHING, PRACTICALLY ANYTIME.”** With an industry that faces many unknowns, direct communication to the public becomes a key tactic.

Partner agencies of the OEM include: [Department of Human Services](#), [Department of Forestry](#), [Wildland Firefighting Department](#), and [Department of Transportation](#). The OEM supports 10 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) and more than 50 county, city, and tribal local emergency management officers around the state.



Professional headshot photo of April Davis.

Alongside California and Washington, Oregon is one of three states with an emergency alert system operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) called [ShakeAlert](#) to alert people on their phones if an earthquake is coming.

The earthquake detection tool uses science and technology to allow a few seconds of the alert to be able to better protect the people in these states. Davis works closely with agency to promote this app to ensure safety across the state.

One of the most valuable professional development training Davis participated in is the Government Social Media Conference. This annual conference supports the public sector of social media professionals by hosting national events, online trainings, and a community of government social media managers from across the country. State and federal agencies from across the country attend this conference.

“I enjoy hearing from the guest speakers from each social media platform, learning more about proper online management of professional social media accounts, and networking with industry experts across the nation,” Davis said.

Through a campaign called [“Be 2 Weeks Ready,”](#) Davis advocates for every Oregonians to have an emergency plan and bag ready for two weeks if a disaster happens. She recommends having enough food, water, and supplies for every person and pet in each household.

The Be 2 Weeks Ready campaign is especially important for communities that are historically marginalized and underserved due to the lack of accessibility to resources. The OEM is most worried about the chance of the Cascadia earthquake and tsunami.

To promote the highest safety and awareness of potential risks in Oregon, Davis is excited to have



Davis adjusts the lighting in the press room where she coordinates press conferences and media productions for her career on March 12, 2024.

a fruitful career at the OEM to create an impact on emergency preparedness with Oregonians. She knows how important the OEM is to keep residents prepared and safe.

Davis offers some valuable advice to any Oregonian:

**“YOU CAN PLAN AND PREPARE BUT YOU CANNOT PREDICT, LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES, AND BE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS,” DAVIS SAID. “EVERY BIT OF PREPARATION WILL MAKE YOU BETTER OFF IN THE FUTURE.”**

The OEM’s goal is to create a culture of preparedness, with the guiding values of advocacy, collaboration, innovation, and leadership, to empower Oregonians to thrive in times of crisis.

For more information about the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, please visit <https://www.oregon.gov/oem/pages/default.aspx> or call 503-378-2911.

