OSAC
Bureau of Diplomatic Security
U.S. Department of State

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7/12/2024 | 📑 OSAC Analysis

★ 2.00 Average rating

Basic Tools for Global Situational Awareness

Summary

There is a plethora of tools out there that several OSAC members likely utilize frequently for global situational awareness. However, two tools highlighted in this report may be less frequently used or underutilized; RSS feeds for information and maps for visualizations, both of which can greatly improve an individual's and organization's global situational awareness.

RSS Feeds

An RSS (or Really Simple Syndication) feed is a continually updating source of information that publishes updates. More information on RSS feeds can be found [here](#) ⧉ .

U.S. Department of State

Though located on travel.state.gov, which hosts [Travel Advisories](#), [Country Information Pages](#), and other helpful resources, OSAC members may be less familiar with one feature offered by the U.S. Department of State: RSS feeds.

The U.S. Department of State has two RSS feeds available to which users can subscribe:

The first is a [feed](#) for Travel Advisories.

The second is a [feed](#) for U.S. Embassies' alerts, where you can receive alerts for that particular country (the alerts begin on page 5). Here, the countries are listed alphabetically by their two-letter ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 code; a listing of those can be found [here](#) ⧉ . The RSS feed information also includes a link to that alert page on the specific embassy's website. The benefit of the RSS feed is that it pushes the alert information to you, rather than the need to manually check a particular embassy's website to see if there are any new alerts.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC also offers an RSS [feed](#) ⧉ for their [Travel Notices](#) ⧉ , through which you can be "notified whenever any new or updated travel notices are posted anywhere on the Travelers' Health website." Additional information can be found [here](#) ⧉ .

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

NOAA's National Hurricane Center (NHC) and Central Pacific Hurricane Center (CPHC) provide RSS [feeds](#) ⧉ that include all of their "tropical cyclone and marine text products along with general basin-wide feeds." Dynamic feeds and text product feeds are available.

How Do I Subscribe to an RSS Feed?

There are several ways to subscribe to an RSS feed. The first is through a third-party RSS feed reader. While OSAC does not endorse any one in particular, several exist online.

The second way to receive RSS feed information is through an email client. Outlook, for example, provides a [simple way](#) ⧉ to add RSS feeds through their desktop app. Other email clients may also offer the same ability to add a feed.

Mapping as an Incident Analysis Tool

Mapping can be an incredibly useful and timesaving tool during and immediately after an incident. Whether your organization operates offices, factories, campuses, or any other type of physical presence, creating and maintaining a map of your organization's assets may assist in the analysis of and reaction to an incident. Many OSAC members may already utilize mapping software or applications—or third-party vendors and emergency-response providers may maintain mapping software on behalf of a client—but for those members or organizations who have yet to utilize mapping in their incident response, the barrier to entry is surprisingly low.

Between services like Google Maps, DataWrapper, OpenStreetMap, and others, there are numerous ways that OSAC members can remain apprised of their fixed assets around the globe. If and/or when an incident does occur, these mapping tools can provide a quick view of the proximity of your organization's asset(s) to the event.

Additional Information

If any full-access OSAC member is looking for assistance, advice, or a tutorial on mapping or setting up RSS feeds for their organization, please reach out to OSAC Asia with the subject line as the title of this report, "Basic Tools for Global Situational Awareness."

For more information on these topics, please contact OSAC's regional teams.

Staying Connected (U.S. Department of State)

Attachments

📄 OSAC - Basic Tools for Global Situational Awareness.pdf ⬇