

TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2020

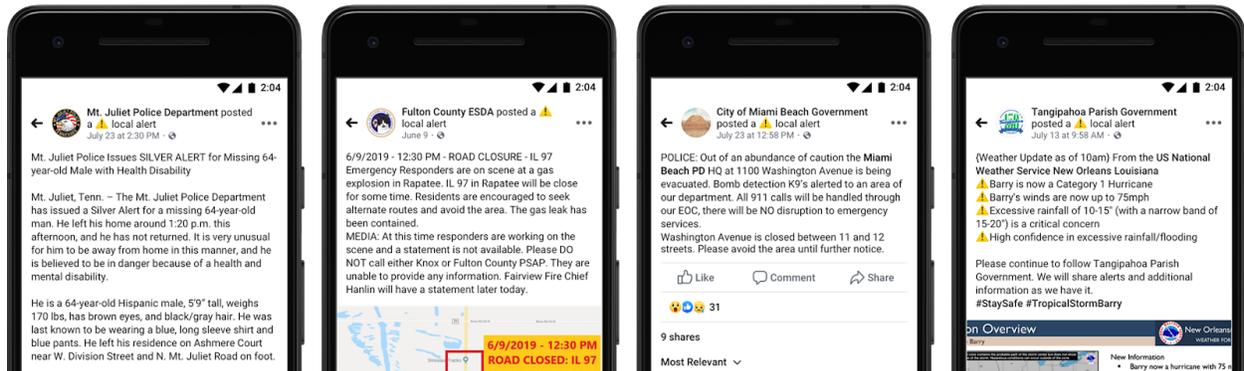
Facebook expands Local Alerts in Australia ahead of bushfire season

Helping state governments and first responders keep people safe and in the know

Today, we're announcing [Local Alerts](#) – Facebook's tool to help state governments and first responders keep people in their communities safe and in the know – will expand to state fire responders with an eligible Facebook Page in Australia by the end of the year.

Local Alerts are designed to help authorities communicate urgent, need-to-know information to their communities in instances where action is taken to protect lives - for events such as bushfires, flooding or emergency situations. From the end of the year, Australian approved authorities will have the ability to create alerts with timely and accurate information to help keep Australians safe and informed during emergency situations.

When authorities mark posts as Local Alerts, Facebook sends a notification to Page followers and marks the post as an alert to make it stand out in News Feed. We send notifications to people living in the affected area, and we also show that information.



How to get Local Alerts

We will begin rolling out access of Local Alert to eligible state fire Facebook Pages by the end of the year. For Australians who want to receive Local Alerts on Facebook, we recommend they follow the Facebook Page(s) of the state fire services available in their community, or subscribe to receive regular local updates.

Local Alerts will be expanded in phases to other eligible state and local government departments and services throughout 2021.

Bushfire recovery report

In times of disaster, people use technologies like Facebook to let their friends and family know they're safe, to learn and share more about what's happening, and to help their communities recover. Today, we also announce the launch of a new report '[Connecting communities through](#)

[digital platforms to respond and recover from crisis](#)', which provides insights into how Australians used our apps and products to come together and support each other during the 2019/2020 black summer.

The report showcases Facebook's contribution in the response and recovery efforts of communities and helped small business owners get back on track. The key findings from the report include:

Community response and recovery

- Over **100** bushfire related Facebook Groups were created
- **Tens of thousands of** Australians used Safety Check
- **19,000** fundraisers were created
- People in over **75** countries donated to bushfire fundraisers
- **\$73 million** was raised from fundraisers across Facebook

Direct Assistance

- Over **\$2 million** donated to Australian charities by Facebook
- **700+** small businesses supported with free Facebook advertising coupons
- **900+** small businesses supported with free Boost with Facebook education



Alisha Elliott, Head of Policy Programs - Australia and New Zealand at Facebook said,

“Throughout the bushfires, we saw Australians coming to digital platforms like Facebook and Instagram to find information, connect with one another and to offer support and assistance to those who had been impacted. This new report outlines the ways in which Australian and international communities came together to respond and recover from this unprecedented bushfire season.

“Building on existing tools to support first responders, such as Safety Check and Disaster Maps, we continually seek feedback about how we can improve our tools to support communities in times of crisis. We're thrilled to be the second country globally to expand Local Alerts and provide local fire authorities and emergency services with another avenue to relay vital information in affected areas. As we approach another tough summer Facebook, will continue to support communities and keep them connected”.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Head of Resilience NSW, who led the recovery of the bushfires last summer as Head of NSW Rural Fire Service said, a truly awful and unprecedented season saw them investing considerably in communication.

“We were using social media and Facebook as an information-gathering tool. It all helped build our intelligence and ratify our understanding of where things were up to. We learnt extraordinarily through that period that the more we provided, the more people wanted to know, and the more people were happy to share.”

As Australians begin to prepare for another tough summer, Facebook has [resources](#) to support and help keep communities connected during this season.

To hear more from Facebook, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, NSW Wildlife, and Supporting East Gippsland Businesses Facebook Page tune into [this Facebook panel discussion](#) where the group reflect on the 2019-2020 Australian bushfires.

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