

TECHNOLOGY AND TRUST:  
HOW NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
IMPACTS ELECTRIC UTILITIES DURING AND  
AFTER NATURAL DISASTERS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the medium an electric utility uses to communicate during a disaster affects organizational reputation and how location (rural vs. non-rural area in America) affects organizational reputation based on communication during a disaster.

A total of 154 participants were asked to read a scenario in which a utility was communicating outage information due to a disaster. Respondents were randomly assigned to receive a scenario where the utility was using either Facebook or an Interactive Voice Response (phone system) to communicate. They were asked to respond to six statements using a five-item Likert scale (*strongly agree – strongly disagree*).

The study found that regardless of the medium used to communicate, there was no significant effect on organizational reputation. The study also found that whether a participant lived in a rural area in the United States or not, location did not have a significant effect on organizational reputation.