Curious About Twitter?
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Twitter has a mixed reputation among folks in the Oakmont age group, given the publicity about politicians being banned from it for violating rules/policies. But many people don't really understand what Twitter is about and how it might be useful to them.

From Lifewire.com: "People send tweets for all sorts of reasons: vanity, attention, shameless self-promotion of their web pages, or pure boredom. However, a growing number of Twitter users send out useful content, and that's the real value of Twitter. It provides a stream of quick updates. Twitter has a lot of drivel, but at the same time, there is a base of useful news and knowledgeable content. Twitter is a blend of instant messaging, blogging, and texting, but with concise content and a broad audience".

Twitter can be another "tool" in the toolbox in emergency situations. An Internet connection is required. Anyone can follow a web link that takes them to Twitter, but in order to post or follow a topic or a person, a userid/login is required. Twitter accounts are free. To sign up it will want to send a text verification code.

What is Twitter and what about the jargon (tweet, retweet)? Twitter is a microblogging social media application (app) where users send short "tweets". Tweets can be up to 140 characters long and can include text, photos/video, and links to web sites. Retweets are analogous to forwarding an e-mail.

Users "follow" (subscribe to) either a topic or a person. People have loginids/usernames with an "@" sign, for instance, @tinanerat (my loginid) or @NWSBayArea (National Weather Service locally) or @CalFire_LNU (CalFire Napa, Sonoma, Lake). Topics are named with hashtags (#), for instance #glassfire or #elections2020. With a Twitter loginid, the user can "follow" certain people or topics by going to a Twitter.com on a computer browser or by downloading the Twitter app to a smartphone or tablet.

The writer of this article has *never* tweeted, but likes to follow a few topics and people once or twice a day, such as weather, CalFire, PG&E, in addition to being signed up for Nixle alerts, PulsePoint, Windy, Fire maps, SRFD, SRPD, SoCo Alert, etc. If one doesn't want to be inundated by "notifications" from Twitter on the topics or people followed, like any app, the notifications can be turned off and just open the app when wanting to see updated tweets. Often, Twitter is the first site with updates on a topic.

Try Twitter out before we have the next fire or evacuation - Twitter could be a useful tool in your toolbox. For more information or electronic copy of this article and previous articles, visit oakmont-learning.org or oakmontvillage.com.