

# GOING VIRAL: CDC's Zombie Apocalypse



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Office of the Director

Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response

Zombie Preparedness:

# **A CASE STUDY**

# Campaign Objectives

- ❑ **Raise awareness about emergency preparedness**
- ❑ **Attract new audiences**
- ❑ **Use pre-existing content and channels to keep costs low**



# Why Zombies?

- ❑ @CDCEmergency: “What are you prepared for?”



# Public Health Matters Blog

CDC Home  
**CDC** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving lives, protecting people, reducing health costs

A-Z Index: [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#) <#>

## Public Health Matters Blog

Sharing our stories on preparing for and responding to public health events

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### Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse

**Categories:** [General](#)

May 16th, 2011 11:48 am ET - Ali S. Khan



There are all kinds of emergencies out there that we can prepare for. Take a zombie apocalypse for example. That's right, I said z-o-m-b-i-e a-p-o-c-a-l-y-p-s-e. You may laugh now, but when it happens you'll be happy you read this, and hey, maybe you'll even learn a thing or two about how to prepare for a *real* emergency.

#### A Brief History of Zombies

We've all seen at least one movie about flesh-eating zombies taking over (my personal favorite is [Resident Evil](#)), but where do zombies come from and why do they love eating brains so much? The word zombie comes from Haitian and New Orleans voodoo origins. Although its meaning has changed slightly over the years, it refers to a human corpse mysteriously reanimated to serve the undead. Through ancient voodoo and folk-lore traditions, shows like the *Walking Dead* were born.



A couple dressed as zombies - Danny Zucco and Sandy Olsson from the movie *Grease* walking in the annual Toronto Zombie Walk.

In movies, shows, and literature, zombies are often depicted as being created by an infectious virus, which is passed on via bites and contact with bodily fluids. Harvard psychiatrist Steven Schlozman wrote a (fictional) medical paper on the zombies presented in [Night of the Living Dead](#) and refers to the condition as *Ataxic Neurodegenerative Satiety Deficiency Syndrome* caused by an infectious agent. The [Zombie Survival Guide](#) identifies the cause of zombies as a virus called solanum. Other zombie origins shown in films include radiation from a destroyed *NASA Venus* probe (as in *Night of the Living Dead*), as well as mutations of existing conditions such as [prions](#), [mad-cow disease](#), [measles](#) and [rabies](#).

The rise of zombies in pop culture has given credence

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“If you’re prepared for a zombie apocalypse, you’re prepared for any emergency.”



# Getting the Word Out

- ❑ Twitter
- ❑ GovDelivery
- ❑ Website (flash banner)
- ❑ Facebook
- ❑ RSS feed
- ❑ Mainstream media

 @CDCemergency  
CDC Emergency

Prepared for a #zombie apocalypse? If so, ur prepared for any emergency. Learn how: CDC PH Matters blog [go.usa.gov/jmo](http://go.usa.gov/jmo)

twitter

1.2 million followers

CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response

 **Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse - CDC Public Health Matters Blog**  
[blogs.cdc.gov](http://blogs.cdc.gov)

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facebook

7,000 fans



## May 18 (10am)

Social Media push; Marketed via Twitter, Facebook, Widget, Badges, Content Syndication, CDC Homepage News item, CDC Homepage Feature. Heavy media attention began and continued through May 20.

## May 16

Blog Posted; Marketed via Email Updates, RSS, Emergency homepage

## May 17 (evening)

Light media attention begins

## May 18

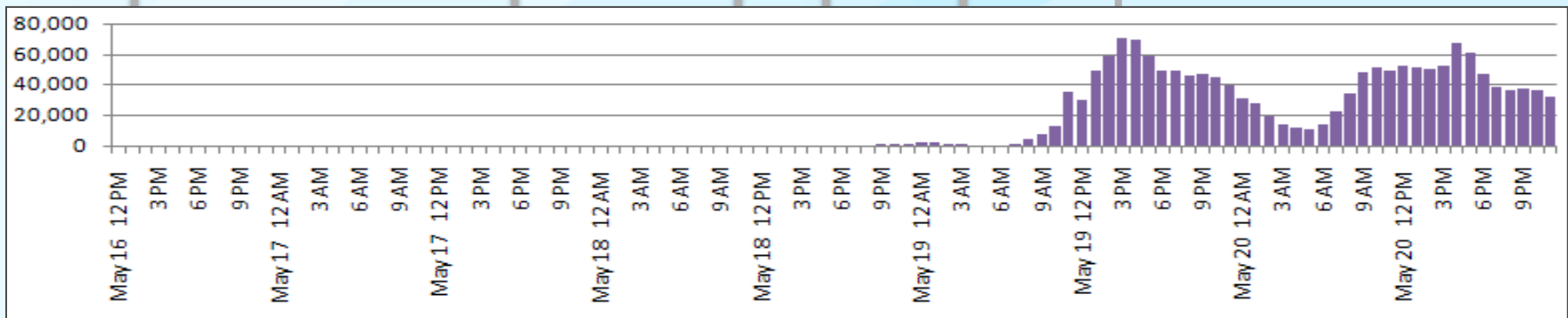
Traffic increases from <80 page views/hour to >30,000. Blog servers crash.

## May 19

Most mainstream media coverage begins

## May 19 (3am)

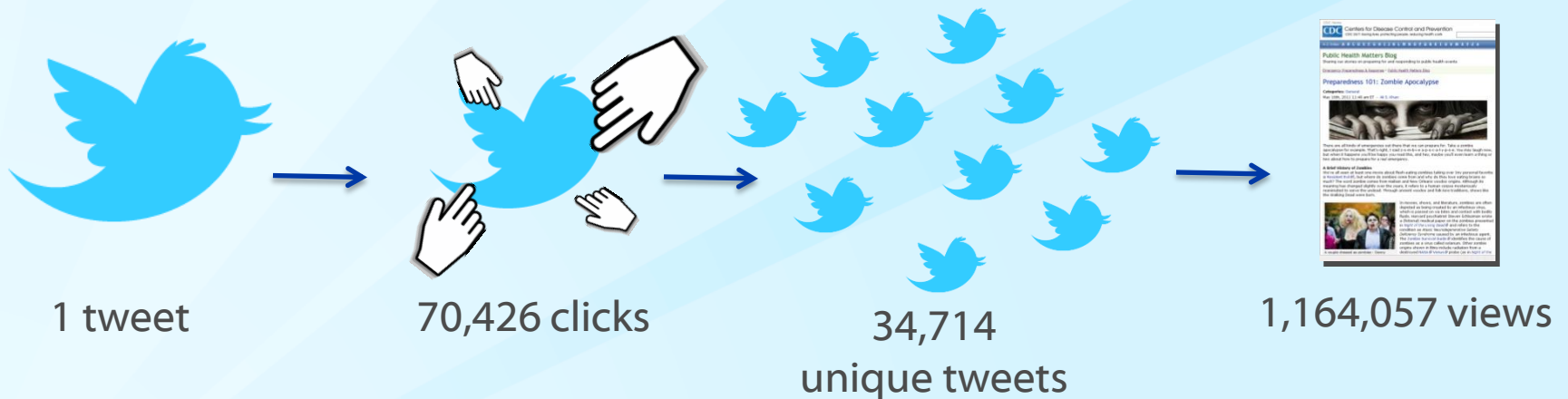
Traffic exceeds 60,000 views per hour



# Twitter

## □ 2 worldwide trends (top tweet terms):

- “CDC”
- “Zombie Apocalypse”





# Facebook

- ❑ **Approx. 867 interactions\* by 5/22**
  - Majority are positive responses
  - Conversations between users about preparedness
- ❑ **More than 7,000 fans in 3 weeks**



CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response shared a link.



**Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse - CDC Public Health Matters Blog**  
blogs.cdc.gov

There are all kinds of emergencies out there that we can prepare for. Take a zombie apocalypse for example. That's right, I said z-o-m-b-i-e a-p-o-c-a-l-y-p-s-e. You may laugh now, but when it happens you'll be happy you read this, and hey, maybe you'll even learn a thing or two about how to prepare...

Like · Comment · Share · May 18, 2011 at 10:11am ·

65 people like this.

View all 14 comments

Write a comment...



**Freddy Lea**  
i will be honest. my love for zombies .. and boy scouts is what had me always being prepared no matter where i go .. got a BoB in my car and a lot of stuff stocked up at home ... plus a wealth of knowledge in my head for most any situation ... glad to see something using pop culture now to promote things such as this ... great tie in ... and is sure to get a TON of attention!  
Saturday at 12:09am · Like · Comment

2 people like this.

**Diane Nielsen** What is a BoB?  
Saturday at 1:30am · Like

**Freddy Lea** bug out bag. a bag of items you need to survive for up to three days. since I commute to work I keep mine in my car in case something happens during the commute or while I am away from home.  
Saturday at 7:36am · Like

# Web

## ❑ CDC Emergency website

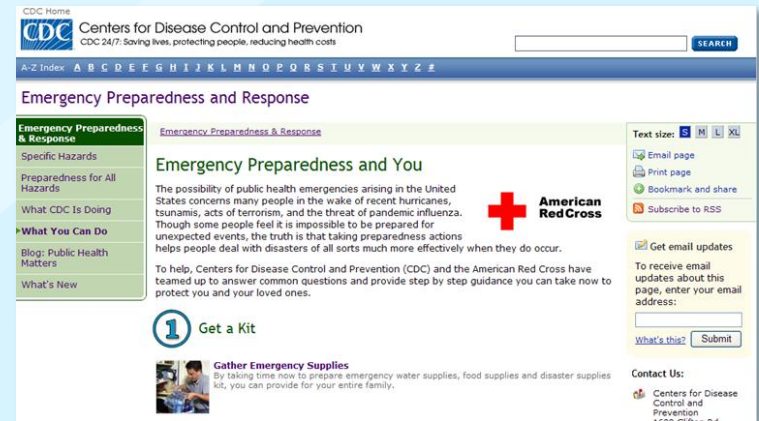
- Page views = 140,000 (5/16-6/7)
  - 1,143% increase over traffic in 2010

## ❑ Blog

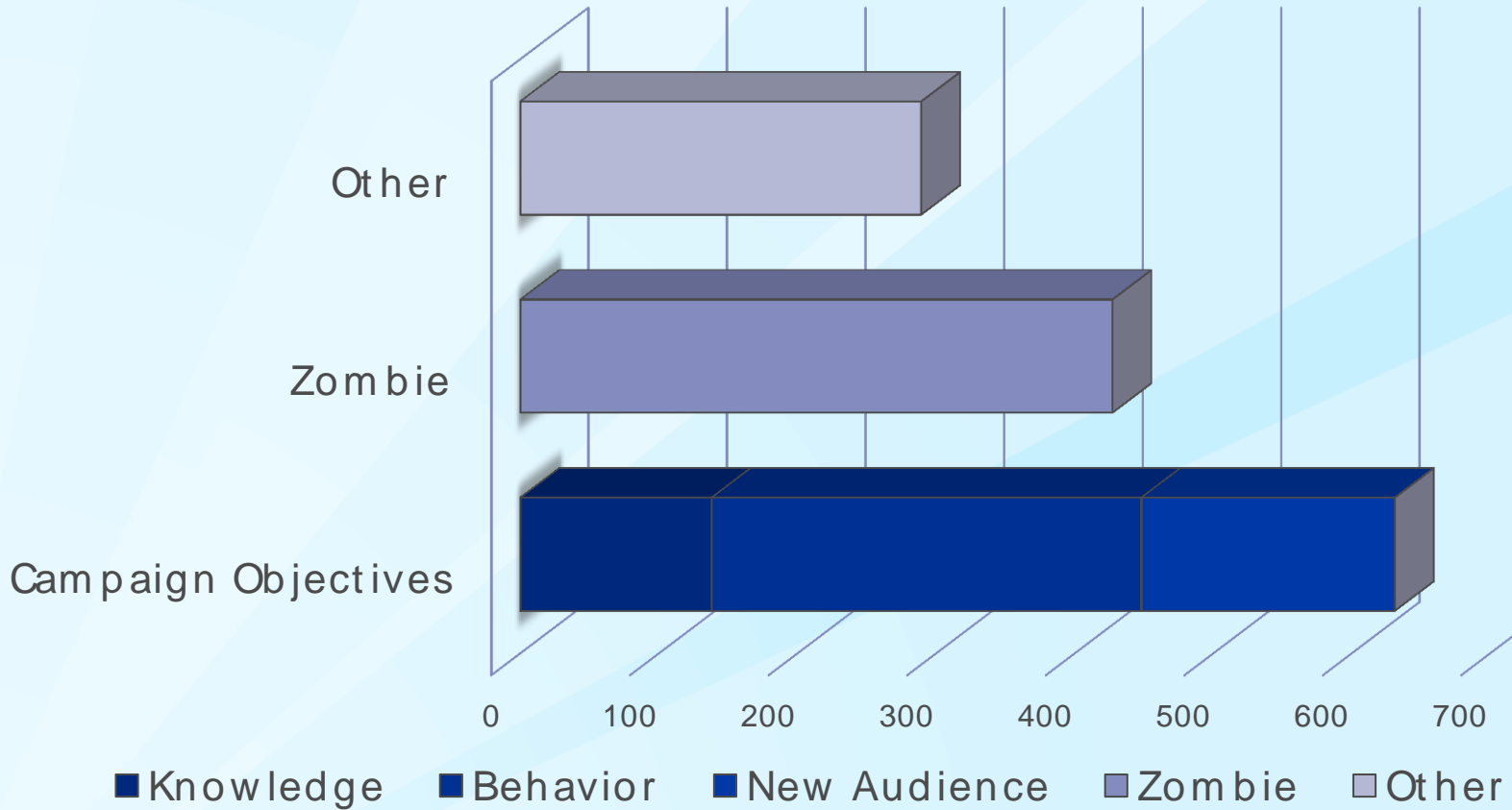
- Over 800k page views in one day (more than peak day of any emergency other than H1N1)
- Typical post 1k – 3k per month

## ❑ Badges/Widget

- 36,578 clicks to badges
- 56 website hosting (widget)
  - >interaction over Japan Response



# Analysis of Comments



\*Based on qualitative analysis of 1085 comments, categories are non-exclusive

# Media

- Over 3,000 articles and news broadcasts published within first week
  - Reached an estimated 3.6 billion viewers
  - Marketing value \$3.4 million
  - Cost \$87

FOX NEWS .com Fair & Balanced

CDC Warns Public to Prepare for 'Zombie Apocalypse'

By Joshua Rhett Miller  
Published May 18, 2011 | FoxNews.com

Print Email Share **Recommend 170K** Tweet 1,553

CNN CNN  
Are you ready for a zombie apocalypse? CDC has advice.  
<http://on.cnn.com/kpxjmg>  
20 May

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# More Zombies

- ❑ Posters
- ❑ T-shirts
- ❑ Graphic novella
- ❑ Video contest
- ❑ Partnerships



# Why Did it Work?

- ❑ **Listening to the audience**
- ❑ **Combined relevance**
- ❑ **Sense of humor**
- ❑ **Brand identity**
- ❑ **Timing**

"Absolutely brilliant approach! Humor with an important preparedness message inside. Plays against the notion that a government agency can't display humor. Really well done."

- Dr. Richard Besser, ABC News

"That was quite possibly the only way you could have gotten me to visit the CDC website and actually read an emergency preparedness blog!"

- Blog comment

"I have already forwarded it to several friends and will do so to several more! I think this was an excellent idea and a way to make people listen to the things you need during any emergency (not just zombies)."

- Blog Comment



Your turn...

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

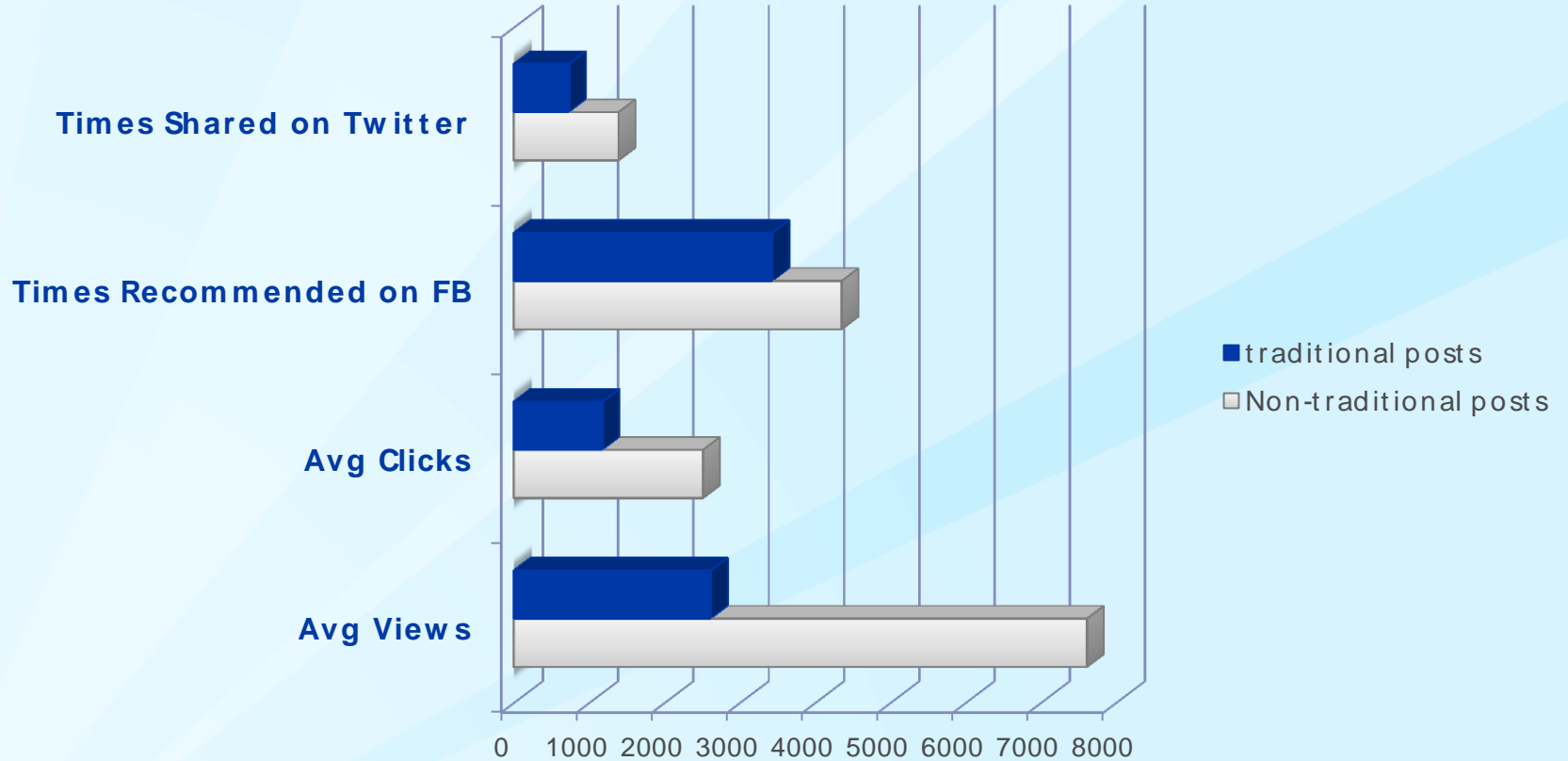
# Engage Your Audience

- ❑ **Create a social media presence**
  - Two-way communication
  - Find out what your audience is interested in
- ❑ **Identify influencers**
  - Partners
  - Media
  - Communities
- ❑ **Be innovative**
  - Don't be afraid to take chances
  - Create content people want to share
  - Have a sense of humor, but be consistent in your message





# Be Sticky



\* Data gathered through Adobe Cite Catalyst, go.usa.gov, Twitter and Facebook

# Examples

## □ Look at campaigns you like...

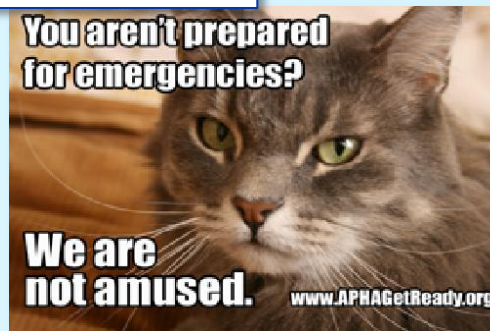
- Federal Reserve Valentines tweets
- #SpotTheShuttle
- Planned Parenthood + Vampires
- APHA LOLcats

 @SFFedReserve  
SanFranciscoFed

I'm going to extraordinary measures to increase your stimulus #fedvalentines



Thinking About Having Sex with a Vampire This Halloween? Planned Parenthood is Here to Help





**For more information please contact Maggie Silver at : [msilver@cdc.gov](mailto:msilver@cdc.gov)**

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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