# Destination Crisis Communications Plan

**Template — not legal advice, and not financial advice.** In an emergency, public safety officials lead and speak first on safety. The DMO's job is to support them, keep visitors and members informed with accurate information, and help the destination recover. Never get ahead of officials on safety facts.

**Organization:** _____ **Approved by the board on:** _____ **Next review:** _____

## Part A. What counts as a crisis for us

Tick the ones that apply and add your own:

☐ Severe storm, flooding, or long power outage (see the severe weather and outage playbook (https://preparedboard.com/templates/coastal-severe-weather-outage-playbook))

☐ Wildfire smoke, heat, or poor air or water quality advisory

☐ Public health event, or a beach or shellfish closure

☐ Major road, bridge, ferry, or airport closure

☐ Serious incident at an attraction, event, or on the water

☐ Crime or safety event that draws national news

☐ Data breach or website or social account takeover at the DMO

☐ Viral false claim about the destination

☐ Other: _____

## Part B. Roles

| Role | Name | Backup | Phone (after hours) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lead spokesperson (usually the executive director) | | | |
| Approves statements before release | | | |
| Liaison to town, county, and state emergency officials | | | |
| Social media and website | | | |
| Member and partner updates (lodging, restaurants, attractions) | | | |
| Board chair (informed; speaks only if agreed) | | | |

**Rule:** Only the lead spokesperson, or someone they name, speaks for the DMO. Board members refer questions to the spokesperson.

## Part C. First-hour checklist

☐ Confirm the facts with the official source (emergency management, police, fire, public health). Write down who, what time, and what they said.

☐ Decide: is this ours to speak on? If officials are leading, share and point to their updates instead of writing our own.

☐ Pause scheduled promotional posts, ads, and emails.

☐ Post a short holding statement (Part D) on our main channels.

☐ Tell the board chair, and members if they need to act.

☐ Start a log: time, what we learned, what we said, who approved it.

☐ Set the next update time and keep to it, even if there is nothing new.

## Part D. Holding statements (fill in now, adjust on the day)

**During an emergency:** "We are aware of [event] in [place]. Public safety officials are leading the response. For safety information, follow [official source and link]. We will share updates for visitors at [our channel] by [time]."

**Travel disruption:** "[Road / ferry / airport] is [closed / delayed] because of [reason], according to [official source]. If you are traveling to [destination], check [official link] before you leave. Most businesses are [open / closed / checking]; we will update [channel] by [time]."

**After the event (recovery):** "[Destination] is [open / partly open]. Here is what's open and what's not: [link]. Thank you to the crews and businesses working to welcome visitors back."

**Rumor control:** "We've seen posts saying [claim]. According to [official source], [the facts]. For the latest, see [link]."

## Part E. Principles for every message

These follow the six principles in the CDC's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) program: be first, be right, be credible, express empathy, promote action, and show respect.

- Say what is known, what is not known yet, and when the next update is.
- Give people something to do: a link, a phone number, a route.
- Don't guess numbers, causes, or reopening dates.
- Don't promote the destination while people are hurt or at risk.

## Part F. Audiences and channels

| Audience | What they need | Channel | Owner |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visitors in the destination now | Safety info from officials, what's open | Social, website banner | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visitors with plans | Travel status, whether to delay | Website, email, social | |
| Members and partners | What to tell guests, what we are posting | Member email, text list | |
| Media | One spokesperson, the facts, next update time | Statement, call-backs | |
| Town and state officials | What we are posting, what we need | Direct call or email | |
| Board | A short summary and decisions needed | Email or call | |

## Part G. The board's role

- **Before:** approve this plan, the spending limit for emergency communications ($_____ without a board vote), and the review date.
- **During:** stay informed, don't speak publicly unless agreed, and be available for a quick decision. If you are a public body, check the open-meeting rules before holding an emergency meeting (see the Maine and New Hampshire public-meeting template (https://preparedboard.com/templates/dmo-public-meeting-notice-and-minutes-me-nh)).
- **After:** receive the after-action review, approve recovery marketing, and record the decisions and follow-ups.

## Part H. After-action review (within _____ days)

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| What happened, and when did we learn of it? | |
| Were our first messages accurate and on time? | |
| Did we stay in step with officials? | |
| What did members and visitors ask that we couldn't answer? | |
| What would we change in this plan? | |
| Recovery marketing: when, what, and what budget? | |

**Reviewed by the board on:** _____ **Recorded in minutes item:** _____

**Based on:** CDC, Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) (https://www.cdc.gov/cerc/php/about/index.html).