



VISIT Southwest MONTANA

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

OVERVIEW

This Crisis Communications Toolkit from Visit Southwest Montana is designed to provide guidance and best practices for protecting the safety, well-being and reputation of Southwest Montana's communities, visitors and tourism partners during a crisis.

As a regional tourism leader connecting travelers to the area's diverse destinations and experiences, Visit Southwest Montana has developed this resource to help organizations prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis situations. Within this toolkit, you will find guidance on crisis definitions, response planning, organizational roles and responsibilities, and key communication do's and don'ts before, during and after a crisis.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

As a regional tourism leader connecting The key to a well-executed crisis plan is communication before, during and after the crisis. Whenever possible, messaging and updates should be proactively shared with the media, members of the public, industry partners, employees, board members and stakeholders.

Each potential crisis situation should be accessed from a holistic level to see what steps – if any – need to be taken within the first few hours during the crisis. At times, it may be possible that these steps could be taken within the first few hours of a crisis and repeated as needed throughout the crisis situation.

DEFINING THE CRISIS

The first step in any crisis is acknowledging the possibility of a crisis situation occurring and/or recognizing the crisis before its existence is well-known and subject to media coverage.

Scenarios Include

NATURAL DISASTERS

- Tornadoes, floods, winter storms, fires, drought, etc.

CRIME

- Murder, rape, abduction, suicide, etc. against tourists and/or residents

ACCIDENTS & THREATS

- Related to properties, businesses, events, airlines, transportation, etc.

ACTS OF TERRORISM (78)

PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES

- Poisoning, pollution, epidemics, pandemics or other viral outbreaks

RACIAL TENSION

FRAUD AND/OR FINANCIAL IMPROPRIETIES

A TRAVEL BOYCOTT

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

ACTIVE SHOOTING

DOS & DON'TS

- ✓ **DO** share where the incident is located
- ✓ **DO** share what is affected (if it's not affecting much of the region, clearly communicate that)
- ✓ **DO** remain calm when visitors or media inquire about the situation
- ✓ **DO** remain updated on the latest information, including road/destination/city closures and any recreation/camping/fishing restrictions
- ✓ **DO** be sure you gather information from an official spokesperson or agency
- ✓ **DO** share information and updates from Visit Southwest Montana and other pertinent agencies and organizations with all frontline employees and industry partners (this could include Visit Montana, other tourism regions, USFS, etc.)
- ✓ **DO** highlight areas of Southwest Montana that are unaffected by the crisis; encourage visitors to explore these areas
- ✓ **DO** focus on the visitor experience and encourage tourists to continue their travel to the region (or redirect them to unaffected areas in Southwest Montana)
- ✓ **DO** assure locals and visitors that public safety is the first and foremost priority; if it's open it's safe
- ✓ **DO** be prepared to talk to the media, while making sure you know the spokesperson for your company, business or organizations
- ✓ **DO** know where to send media queries that are not pertinent to you (fire officials, emergency personnel, Visit Southwest Montana or management agencies for the most current information)
- ✓ **DO** be honest – only provide factual information to media
- ✓ **DO** focus on the positive
- ✓ **DO** put an emphasis on the visitor experience
- ✗ **DON'T** speculate or provide false information; if you don't know something, say you don't know
- ✗ **DON'T** dwell on the negative; help visitors have a positive experience in Southwest Montana
- ✗ **DON'T** blow the crisis out of proportion; stick to what you know

