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The University of the West Indies  
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Disaster Risk Reduction Centre



# **‘OPEN FOR BUSINESS’ A Model Post-Disaster Crisis Communication Strategy & Procedural Guide for Small Tourism Enterprises**

**July 2022**

*From Community Emergency Preparedness and Response (CERT) to Contingency Planning and  
Business Continuity Planning for Small Tourism Enterprises*

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## Business Details

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Name of legal entity

---

Company registration Number (if a company)

---

Business Name

---

Address of Business

---

Main Contact Person

---

Contact person position title

---

Email

---

Telephone

---

Postal Address

---



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# ACRONYMS

CCP .....	Crisis Communications Plan
CDC.....	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDEMA.....	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CHTA.....	Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association
CTO.....	Caribbean Tourism Organization
DRRC.....	Disaster Risk Reduction Centre
GDP .....	Gross Domestic Product
MSME .....	Micro, small and medium enterprise
OAS.....	Organization of American States
OECD .....	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SIDS .....	Small-island developing state
SME .....	Small and medium-sized enterprise
STE.....	Small tourism enterprise
UNECLAC.....	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNWTO.....	World Tourism Organization
UWI .....	University of the West Indies
WTO .....	World Tourism Organization



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS:

### A Model Post-Disaster Crisis Communication Strategy & Procedural Guide for Small Tourism Enterprises

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# USER GUIDE

The Procedural Guide is the go-to document where the user will find many resources summarized all combined in one location.

The Guide addresses the following:

- Traditional and New Media
- Use of technology in crisis communications,
- Multi-lingual inclusive communications
- Partnerships with public and private sector as well as communities and providers of essential services
- Peer-to-Peer STE network
- Data for evidence-based decision making and communications
- Sample Messaging



# INTRODUCTION

## *Tourism and Business Disruption: The Regional Context*

The Caribbean is among the most tourism-dependent regions in the world. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (UNECLAC), in 2019, tourism accounted for 42% of total exports (goods and services) in the Caribbean and exceeded 50% in some countries. The tourism economy, which includes both tourism and all sectors that depend on it, represented 26% of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and given that the tourism economy is highly labor intensive, it accounted for 35% of employment in the Caribbean. Added to that is the fact that in the Caribbean, the tourism sector depends almost entirely on foreign visitors. This is in contrast with South American countries (such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru), where domestic visitors account for more than 50%, and in Mexico, where three quarters of the total visitors are domestic.

At the same time, the region's tourism industry is extremely vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards, including floods, droughts, storms, hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides and volcanic eruptions. In a continuation of a trend of extreme weather events observed over the past two decades, the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season was among the busiest on record, producing 18 tropical depressions, all but one of which intensified into tropical storms. The last two seasons were not much different and while the 2020 hurricane season spared the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) from major disasters, the impact of storms and extreme weather during the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated vulnerabilities and rapid decline within the tourism sector. In all cases, the tourism sector in several destinations was severely affected, leading to temporary and in some cases, permanent closures of hotels and ancillary businesses, interruptions in the operations of air and seaports, local transportation, sudden or ongoing industrial action and other disruptions in the supply chain and in the loss of livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people who are directly and indirectly employed by the tourism industry.

According to the last report produced by UNECLAC, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the tourism sector hardest. Data from the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) substantiates this crippling effect with statistics showing a 65.5% decline in tourist arrivals to the region in 2020. The actual number of arrivals totaled just over 11 million, compared to a record 32 million visitors in 2019 (CTO, 2020). Statistics further show global recovery in 2021 but the figures are still far below pre-pandemic levels.





Setting aside this unprecedented biological global disaster, the region's vulnerability to disasters is further exacerbated by the openness of national economies; the small size of populations and internal markets in many countries; adverse physiographic characteristics including geographic location; a limited range of natural resources; and the presence of critical social and economic infrastructure along the coast. Not only does the interplay of these factors create a cycle of deepening social, economic, and environmental vulnerability to disasters, but they also constrain the efforts of the region to build its resilience to disasters, forcing affected countries to incur additional debt to finance post-disaster reconstruction, while simultaneously facing declining national income and foreign exchange to service this debt. The COVID-19 pandemic has also necessitated additional costs related inter alia to testing, vaccinating, and other bio-sanitary protocols to allow the tourism sector and tourism small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to remain open.

### *Why of Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises?*



*Figure 1: Economic engine of the Caribbean*

At the center of the economic engine (Figure 1) of the Caribbean are the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), part of a large and long supply chain, which according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), represents 99% of all companies in the region and generate more than half of available jobs. Thus, the

resilience of communities and sustainability of their livelihoods depend on the resilience of these small tourism enterprises which are highly exposed and vulnerable to the impact of disasters. It is worth noting that 2021 research undertaken by the OAS and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) reveal that only 32% of SMTEs have a business continuity plan, which can help to significantly reduce recovery time in the aftermath of disaster.

# PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Disruptions to a business may materialize in several different forms. For most businesses, the best way to prepare for and mitigate the impact of such disruptions, is to plan for the unexpected, the unusual and the unfamiliar. In the event of an emergency, crisis or disaster, having a Business Continuity Plan that includes a clear directive for communications makes the difference in how quickly the business can recover after the disruption.

Information in this procedural guide, which should be used as part of a business' overall continuity of operations process (**Figure 2**), is designed to identify potential local, national, regional or global crises or other form of business disruptions that have the potential to:

- Escalate in intensity, or adversely impact the business' financial position
- Cause physical harm to people or damage to property or the environment
- Interfere with normal business operations, causing temporary closure or scaled back/limited service
- Be subjected to close media or government scrutiny
- Impact the positive public image of the business, its brand and its officers.

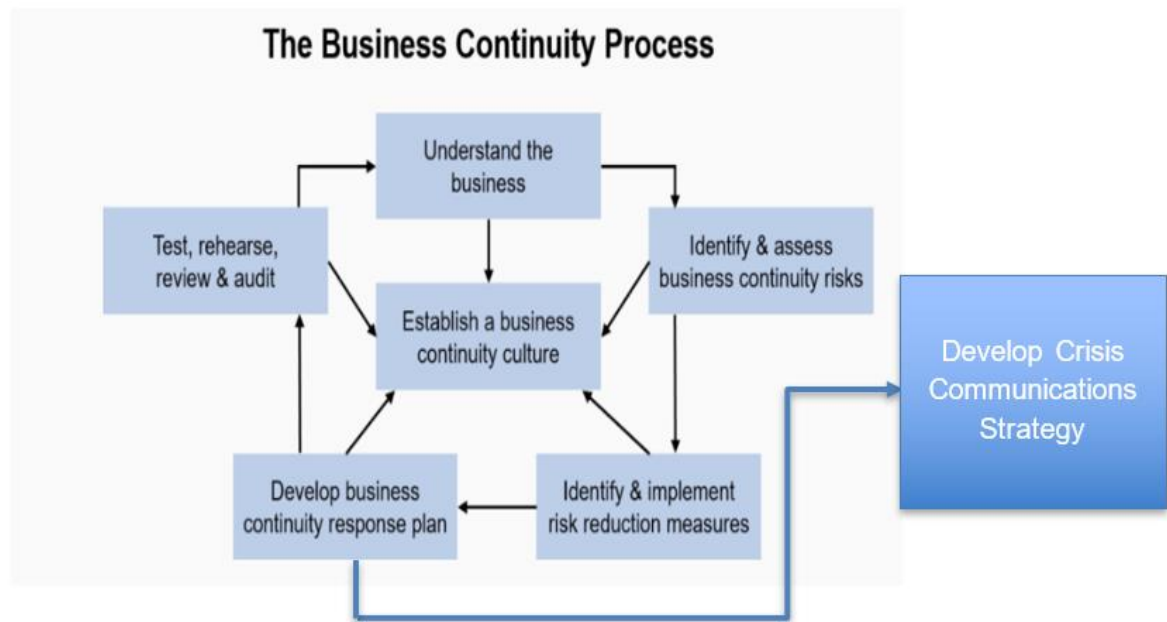


Figure 2: The Business Continuity Process.

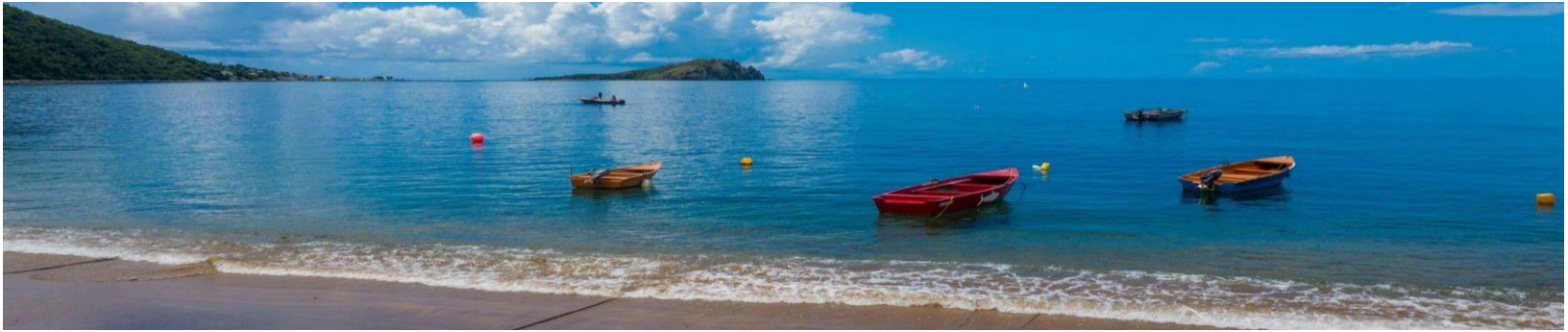
The guide also includes appropriate response strategies for the various business disruptions that have been identified.

### *Why is a procedural guide needed?*

This procedural guide documents the recommended steps to be taken by small tourism enterprises in the event of hazard impact, disaster or other form of business disruption. The overarching goal is to position one's business to recover from a disruption or crisis as quickly as possible. This guide should be updated regularly to ensure its relevance in the timely, accurate and responsive dissemination of information. At a minimum, it provides the following:

- A proactive communications strategy to keep all stakeholders (internal and external) fully informed about the emergency, disaster or other disruption that is affecting the business
- Broad tools for use with other external audiences and key messages for controlling the flow of sensitive information that will allow for continuity of operations
- Model guidance that can be adapted to suit the specific context of each STE
- Procedures that are critical to the post-event processes that guide business continuity efforts





# TARGET AUDIENCE

## *Who should use the Guide?*

As a procedural manual to inform post-event actions to facilitate recovery and resumption of operation, this guide is intended for use by the following:

**Accommodation Facilities**- large, medium and small hotels, self-catering villas, hostels, 'Bed & Breakfast' establishments, Airbnb, home-sharing hosts and other non-traditional accommodation providers, caravan parks and campsites

**Food & Beverage Establishments** - restaurants, cafes, hotel dining-rooms, fast food outlets, bars, street food stalls

**Transportation Providers** - air carriers, bus companies, car rentals, taxis, recreational boating, inter-island ferries, cruise lines

**Entertainment Outlets** - nightclubs, casinos, cabarets, theatres, concert venues, shops

**Attractions** – theme parks, museums, galleries, cultural heritage/historical sites, gardens, amusement/recreation parks, sacred sites, interpretative centres, national parks and other protected areas

**Travel Trade Operations** - travel agencies (including online), tour wholesalers, ground handling agents / inbound agents, tour operators (including specialists), and tour guides

**Event Planners** – carnivals, sports tournaments, meetings/conferences/ conventions, shows/festivals, trade shows, fairs & exhibitions

**Other Tourism Service Providers** – government tourism departments, tourist information centres, research and reservation services, advertising agencies, trade press, insurance, marketing professionals, professional associations, consultants, tourism academics

*The overarching goal is to  
position one's business to recover  
from a crisis as quickly as possible.*

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

There are two broad categories of tourism-related crises, namely those beyond the control of property and those resulting from a failure to put contingency measures in place to deal with predictable risks.

## Category 1: Outside the Control of Management

Crises outside management control include natural hazards, epidemics/pandemics, terrorist activity, civil unrest and sudden global economic events or break in supply chain.

## Category 2: Management Failure/Lack of Contingency Planning

Crises can occur within the business or at the level of a region or country, and include (within the business) collapse due to management shortcomings, financial fraud, loss of data, destruction of physical location/ place of business due to fire or flood, without adequate back-up procedures or insurance cover.

The ability of a business to execute its essential functions at its continuity facilities depends on the identification, availability, and redundancy of critical communications and information technology (IT) systems to support connectivity among key leadership personnel, internal business elements, other businesses, critical customers and stakeholders, and the public, during crisis and disaster conditions.

Communications involves establishing, using, maintaining, augmenting, and providing backup for sharing information with clients, employees and other key groups, i.e. government emergency response services. It identifies the threat or the impact and the specific response to avert the threat or address its impact, the most effective messages and the channels of dissemination.

## *Types of Crises and their Impact on Tourism*

The UNWTO (2011) places tourism crises into five categories:

1. Environmental, including geological and extreme weather events, and human-induced situations such as climate change and deforestation
  2. Societal and Political, including riots, crime waves, terrorist acts, human rights abuse, coups, violently contested elections
  3. Health-related, such as epidemics/pandemics affecting humans and/or animals
  4. Technological, including transportation accidents and IT system failures
  5. Economic, such as major currency fluctuations and financial crises
- In addition, specific events may affect individual businesses, such as:
- Accidents affecting clients in the public realm, e.g. traffic accidents, mugging, drowning
  - Accidents or events within an individual enterprise, e.g. fires, injuries, food poisoning

# PRE AND POST IMPACT PROCEDURAL STRATEGIES

## *Plan, Manage, Respond and Recover*

- Crisis communication planning, or developing a crisis management plan as it is also known, is about identifying potential crises that your organisation may face and putting plans in place to address the particular crisis/emergency/ disaster. (Prohibition PR, 2022). A sample crisis communications plan template is provided at Appendix I.
- The speed and success of recovery is based on the processes and protocols established prior to the emergency/ disaster. All stakeholders should be involved to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive planning process (FEMA, 2011). This should also include the establishment of ongoing communications with STEs, to ensure solid relationships are built prior to the occurrence of an event.
- There is a need to ensure that the communities in which STEs operate and the STE employees can return to work quickly after impact. This means considering the resilience and recovery of those communities, households and supporting systems are integrated in the crisis communications strategy.

## *Pre-impact (Before)*

- Through a community profile mapping, establish the location of the business within the ecosystem, identify the services it provides, the inputs that are critical to its operation and the clientele who uses the services (Table 1).
- Anticipate crises and compile data on specific risks and past crises. Many crises will have the same impact or a similar sequence of impacts and require the same resources. Consider crises that could cause:
  - the business to close down for a period of time,
  - employees to work off site, from home or a business recovery site
  - employee injury or death
  - impact beyond the perimeters of the business and are national or regional in scope

Upon careful consideration of the above, determine the impact of the crisis and the resources that may be needed to manage the impact (**Table 1**).

- Evaluate the impact of interruptions on critical business operations
  - identify the business activities along with the impacts upon the business if one is unable to carry out the activity
  - identify the activities that need to be maintained following an incident, the maximum allowable downtime, how quickly the activity must be resumed, and the resource requirements needed (**Table 2**)



- Identify a team and an approach to deal with the crisis, including procedures for verifying and releasing information to the public.
  - Composition will vary depending on the size of business but these three should be considered: *operations, communications, and subject matter expertise.*
  - Outside resources that could supplement or fill gaps in the team should be considered and relationships, either formal or informal, developed as appropriate
  - Consider establishing a STE Crisis Help Desk that can support implementation of the crisis communications procedures and strategies
- Determine protocols for addressing medical emergencies within a crisis, including rendering qualified First Aid and notifying the authorities immediately.
- Internal Communications: Create a list of important staff members who should be contacted in the event of any emergency (**Table 3**)

Table 1: Vulnerability Assessment Tool

Hazard	Occurrence Potential	Potential impact on			Available Resources	Score
		Human	Property	Business		

Table 2: Business Impact Analysis

Department/ Business Unit	Business Process/Function	Description if applicable	Dependencies What does this process/function depend on	Dependencies What depends on this process/function	Process Frequency Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually	# of staff required for this process	Maximum Allowable Downtime (hours/days)	Recovery Priority Critical, High, Medium, Low, Deferrable
					○			

Table 3: Staff Emergency Contact List

Name	Role	Tel	Email

- Business Partners: Create a list of important company partners that should be contacted in the event of any emergency. This may include member organisations, government departments, as well as strategic vendors needed for operation (**Table 4**)

Table 4: Business Partners Emergency Contact List

Name	Role	Tel	Email

- Determine how to work together “on the ground” and create a network system with other STEs and key community stakeholders near to the geographic area where the STE is located or conducts its business operations. This ensures engagement of communities and community communications. Depending on the size, type and location, STEs may be able to offer significant resources to others during a critical incident, such as:

  - Facilities (e.g. physical shelter, meeting space, sleeping areas);
  - Personnel (e.g. labor, translators, first-aid assistance);
  - Equipment (e.g. vehicles, food preparation, computers);
  - Supplies (e.g. water, food, electricity, fuel, plastic tarps); or
  - Communications (e.g. telephones, internet email access, peer-to-peer communications).
- The communities where the STEs operate are unique spaces, with each person that associates with the community and businesses accessing and consuming information in different ways. It is important to include procedures for communicating with the community in the business’ Crisis Communications Strategy.
- Media List: Understanding that media engagement is a key factor in ensuring that information is effectively communicated to staff as well as visitors, friends and family and the local community, create a list of all local and regional media professionals, personalities and companies that could be helpful in getting your message to the public. Consider that in today’s era, this may also mean notable community persons/influencers with respected platforms (including social media) and large followings (Table 5).

Table 5: Media/Influencer Emergency Contact List

Name	Role	Tel	Email





- Company Collateral: Keep safe, an updated list of communications tools and their passwords and/or access codes (**Table 6**).

*Table 6: Compilation of Company Collateral/ Important Information*

Platform	Website	Username	Password
Company Website	<a href="http://www.yourwebsite.com">www.yourwebsite.com</a>		
Facebook	<a href="http://www.facebook.com">www.facebook.com</a>		

- Establish/Maintain a Disaster/Industry Link of STEs and disaster/emergency management entities to ensure that STEs are able to adequately prepare for, respond to and recovery from hazard impacts
- Train employees who have responsibility for communicating during a crisis.
  - Community Emergency Response Teams should be a vital part of any crisis communication strategy for STEs as these teams usually have established communication channels that can be utilized by the STEs
- Develop pre-scripted messages (in multiple languages as appropriate) to:
  - Inform of impending threat/crisis where it is a slow-onset event
  - Confirm existence of crisis
  - Provide information about the impact on business and anticipated duration
  - Provide update on business continuity arrangements
  - Confirm end of crisis and resumption of normal operations
- Considerations for loss of electricity: A power outage is a major disruption to any business. While a brief outage may be annoying, a longer outage can significantly disrupt business operations. Being prepared for a possible power failure will help lessen the impact should it occur (**Table 7**).
  - Know who to contact if the power goes out and be familiar with the emergency backup power system(s) for your facility, including what is covered and how long the backup power can be relied upon.
  - Install an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for equipment highly sensitive to slight power delays or fluctuations.
  - Maintain a list of essential equipment that may be damaged by a power surge when the power is restored.

- Maintain a list of essential equipment that may have an automatic “ON” switch and may come on by itself when power is restored, even if no one is around.
- Considerations for basic utilities: Power is not the only utility that may be affected by a disaster. Consider the impact of a prolonged failure of water systems, heating and cooling, or specialized ventilation systems. Some of these failures will have limited impact, while others may be catastrophic. The time of year will also be a factor (**Table 7**).

*Table 7: Business Continuity Considerations for Utilities*

Utility	How would an outage affect the business?	How would operations continue during an outage?
Electricity		
Water		
Air-Conditioning		
Ventilation Systems		
Telephone		
Internet		

- Information Technology: It is difficult to imagine how to possibly operate or work without computers or the Internet. Unfortunately, systems can fail or get stolen. What would you do if the Internet were to go down? How long could you manage? (**Table 7**)
  - Ensure that automatic back-up is scheduled and performed on all network computers.
  - Laptops should be routinely backed up, either to a network server or an encrypted USB storage device.
  - Maintain a list of vital documents, files, and folders and include how they are backed up (*Example: Google Drive, Box, network backup*).
  - Keep duplicate copies of important documents stored in a secure off-site location or on an encrypted USB storage device.
- Build into the Crisis Communication Strategy solid mechanisms for user friendly data and databases to support decision making and communications
- Test the crisis communication plan frequently
  - Involve other STEs, national disaster entities, partners and community members

### *Impact (During)*

- Gather and analyse relevant information from trusted and reliable sources for decision-making purposes
- Ensure thorough understanding of the crisis and monitor updates from disaster management authorities
- Determine the message to be communicated
- Decide on the channels of distribution
- Disseminate pre-scripted crisis messages to both internal and external audiences of the organisation. Broadcast, narrowcast, online, print/traditional, and social media must be seen as conduits to deliver essential messages and information to all audiences, both internal and external, during a crisis
- Monitor the public's response to the information being disseminated and modify/refine/adapt. Special attention should be given to monitoring social media channels, due to the speed at which information is transmitted across these platforms and the potential negative and damaging impact misinformation/fake news can have on your business.

During emergencies and disasters, there should be a coordinated response at all levels based on the plans, procedures, strategies, guidance and relationships established during the pre-impact phase. The foundation laid during the pre-impact phase will allow STEs to, proactively and independently, implement and communicate their own "Open for Business" post impact recovery journey.

STEs should consider sharing information with the National Emergency Operations Centre, Tourism Emergency Operations Centre and Command Centres. The specific activities should be included as part of the pre-impact phase and would include identifying an individual with whom STEs can have a direct line of communication and who can disseminate relevant information. This helps with the credibility of the information provided and contributes to information management particularly during emergencies and disasters.

### *Post-impact (After)*

- Continue to collect data on the issue and any other potential issues, evaluate the information and assess potential impact from a communications and reputation perspective
- Make any required adjustments to the plan, based on the findings/conclusions of a damage assessment exercise
- Keep stakeholders informed of the status of recovery efforts
- Use lessons identified from previous experiences or the experiences of others to improve the organisation's crisis management system.

# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The World Tourism Organization (2011) defines crisis communications as the process, once a crisis has started, of minimizing its negative consequences for the organization and the stakeholders the organization is responsible for. It requires immediate decisions and countermeasures using all the communication tools at its disposal to influence and steer development in as positive a direction as possible.

The short to long-term impact of a crisis on a business depends on how existing clients/customers are handled during the first few hours and days of the incident. Key factors are:

1. Accessibility
2. Immediacy
3. Frequency
4. Specificity
5. Clarity

1. **Accessibility:** A database of current customers and their email addresses and mobile phone numbers should be created as part of business operations. This list should be updated at least daily or in real time for immediate use when a crisis occurs. Documented information about customers/clients, stakeholders and vendors (origin, interests, demographics, etc.) helps to improve decision-making and tailor messages that speak specifically to their relationship with the STE. Good, timely, reliable data and a database is at the core of developing and implementing a good crisis communication strategy. Build into the Crisis Communication Strategy solid mechanisms for user friendly data and database to support decision making and communications. A Community Communications Procedure should also be included as part of the Crisis Community Strategy for STEs.
2. **Immediacy:** A standby/holding statement addressed to customers should be prepared and available for almost immediate dissemination by email, text messaging, on the business/crisis website and any other information sharing network that may exist.
3. **Frequency:** Subsequent messages should be sent out frequently, as often as daily or even several times a day during the initial stages of the crisis, to assure customers that you are equally concerned about the impact of the crisis on them and their ability to access your services. Frequent contact will help build/ solidify/maintain existing business relationships which in the long run, can influence customer loyalty and generate critical support for the business in the post crisis period.
4. **Specificity:** To the extent possible, subsequent messages after the initial standby/holding statement should provide specific information and recommendations for action by specific groups. If there is no new information or action, this should be communicated in the message.

5. **Clarity:** Messages should be clear and concise and presented without ambiguity. Brevity is good during an emergency so long as there is real content and frequency. In a crisis, persons are likely to face a barrage of information, therefore the approach should be short/precise/frequent rather than long/detailed/infrequent.

### *Crisis Management Team*

People will want to know what happened and where to get further details about the crisis hence it is important to designate a Crisis Management Team and spokespersons prior to an actual emergency (University of Minnesota, 2015). It is essential that the roles in this team are clearly designated and there is cohesion in the messages which are disseminated. It is important to note that the lack of verified information and inaccuracies in messages can have negative repercussions on business operations and the recovery process; both in the short and long term. A crisis-management plan is no good without a competent team that can execute it successfully and consistently when the need arises, while ensuring efficient, effective and timely communication. Depending on the size of the business, crisis management may be handled by just one person, or there may be a dedicated team.

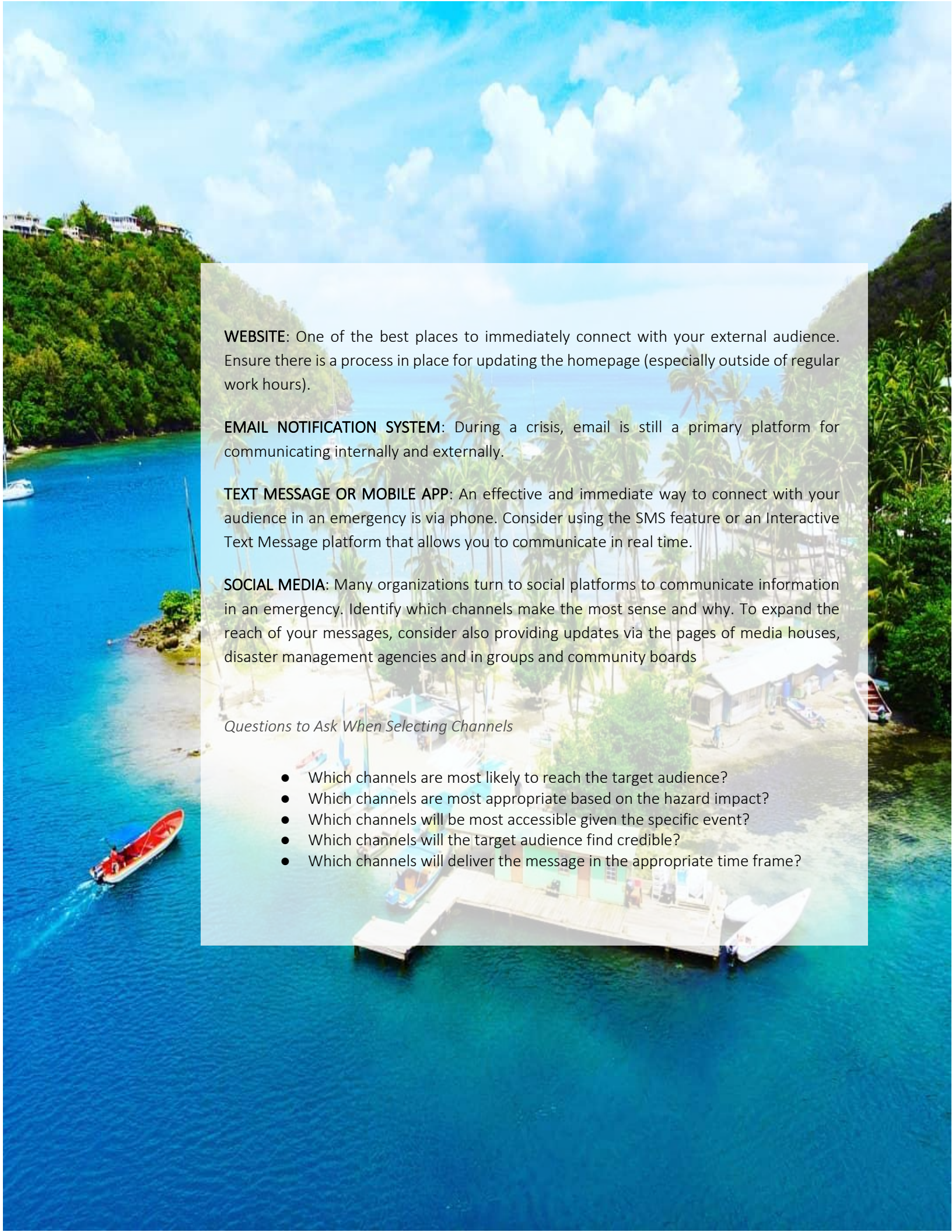
In any event, a crisis communication team includes people who can:

- decide what actions to take,
- carry out those actions,
- offer expertise or education in the relevant areas.

### *Communication Channels*

Selecting the right communication channels is necessary to effectively deliver messages and which must be strategic and based on the audiences' needs, messages that need to be conveyed, available resources, nature and scope of the event, and goals of the business. In addition, some communication channels have a particular usefulness in the immediate crisis situation and some crises may limit the viability of some channels. Effective messaging is usually delivered over multiple platforms to capture the widest possible target audience. Similarly, in periods of crisis, it is important to note that multiple channels may be required to reach the entire target audiences. A key consideration should be the ease of translation of the messages for persons who are not native to the language used. As the crisis evolves/devolves, the mixture of channels may change. Regardless of the channel selected, it is important to ensure consistency in the messaging (CDC, 2014).

Having prior knowledge of the preferred channels of communication before the crisis hits, will help to maximise the potential reach of the message and will provide SMTEs with a head start when recovering from an event. Several factors determine what channel can be used. These include the complexity, style, purpose, and sensitivity of the message; target audience; availability of certain materials and media; and resources.

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The water is a vibrant blue, and a red boat is moving across it, leaving a white wake. A wooden pier extends into the water, with a white boat docked. The shoreline is lush with green vegetation, including palm trees. In the background, a hillside is covered in dense greenery, and a few buildings are visible on the crest. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds.

**WEBSITE:** One of the best places to immediately connect with your external audience. Ensure there is a process in place for updating the homepage (especially outside of regular work hours).

**EMAIL NOTIFICATION SYSTEM:** During a crisis, email is still a primary platform for communicating internally and externally.

**TEXT MESSAGE OR MOBILE APP:** An effective and immediate way to connect with your audience in an emergency is via phone. Consider using the SMS feature or an Interactive Text Message platform that allows you to communicate in real time.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Many organizations turn to social platforms to communicate information in an emergency. Identify which channels make the most sense and why. To expand the reach of your messages, consider also providing updates via the pages of media houses, disaster management agencies and in groups and community boards

#### *Questions to Ask When Selecting Channels*

- Which channels are most likely to reach the target audience?
- Which channels are most appropriate based on the hazard impact?
- Which channels will be most accessible given the specific event?
- Which channels will the target audience find credible?
- Which channels will deliver the message in the appropriate time frame?

# Social Media Policy

**\*\*\*Please update according to your company and country standards\*\*\***

## *Policy Brief & Purpose*

The company's policy provides a framework for using social media. Social media is a place where people exchange information, opinions and experiences to learn, develop and have fun. This policy provides practical advice to avoid issues that might arise from careless use of social media in the workplace. We expect all our employees to follow this policy.

Also, by "social media", we refer to a variety of online communities like blogs, social networks, chat rooms and forums – not just platforms like Facebook or Twitter. Employees should:

- Ensure others know that your personal account or statements don't represent our company. You shouldn't state or imply that your personal opinions and content are authorised or endorsed by our company. We advise using a disclaimer such as "opinions are my own" to avoid misunderstandings.
- Ensure that the channels used as the original source of information are official channels and those of the organisation. To expand potential social media reach, encourage employees to share the official posts.
- Avoid sharing intellectual property like trademarks on a personal account without approval. Confidentiality policies and laws always apply.
- Avoid any defamatory, offensive or derogatory content. It may be considered as a violation of our company's anti-harassment policy, if directed towards colleagues, clients or partners.

## *Representing the Company*

Employees who handle corporate social media accounts or speak on the company's behalf are expected to act carefully and responsibly to protect the company's image and reputation. You should:

- Be respectful, polite and patient, when engaging in conversations on our company's behalf. You should be extra careful when making declarations or promises towards customers and stakeholders.
- Avoid speaking on matters outside your field of expertise when possible. Everyone should be careful not to answer questions or make statements that fall under somebody else's responsibility.
- Follow our confidentiality policy and data protection policy and observe laws on copyright, trademarks, plagiarism and fair use.
- Inform our [PR/Marketing department] when you're about to share any major-impact content.
- Avoid deleting or ignoring comments for no reason. Make it a point to listen and reply to criticism.
- Never post discriminatory, offensive or libelous content and commentary.
- Correct or remove any misleading or false content as quickly as possible.



### Internal and External Communications Checklists

Businesses need to effectively communicate with internal and external groups every day. Communicating early and often will be crucial in efforts to instill confidence in the business.

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Set the context and acknowledge concerns</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You've likely noticed X.</li> <li>● You're probably wondering Y.</li> <li>● You might be feeling Z</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Share the know/don't know plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Here is what we know.</li> <li>● Here is what we don't know.</li> <li>● Here's when we'll update you</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Clarify the decision criteria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Share how decisions were made or will be made</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>State the common goal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make unifying statements.</li> <li>● Reconnect to the company mission.</li> <li>● Share why it matters now</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide options</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where possible, offer some degree of choice or autonomy</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Make a call to action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● List specific (small) steps people can take.</li> <li>● Make the action/behaviour clear</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Commit to a communication cadence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer certainty of cadence, even if certainty of message isn't possible (ie. Every Monday)</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Identify information channels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Let people know where to go with questions and what documents are sources of truth</li> </ul>

Source: LifeLab Learning <https://lifelabslearning.com/lab/crisis-audit/>



# KEY SAMPLE MESSAGES

During any crisis, it is important to concisely communicate the facts in language that is clear, without ambiguity, and easy for your audience to understand. Your message may also convey a desired action.

It is important for small businesses to remember that they have both an internal and external audience they need to communicate to during a crisis. While the tendency is often to focus on the external audience, such as guests or authorities, how you communicate to and with your internal audience and their response to a crisis can be the determining factor on how your business operates immediately before and after impact.

Regardless of the nature of a crisis, do not forget to maintain your social media standards where necessary and maintain your brand's personality once it can convey the same message issued by your local authority. For example, if you are a high-end boutique hotel that commonly shares beautiful images of your rooms and property with inspirational messages about leisure and luxury, you want to communicate similarly.

Below you will find an example of off brand messaging and on brand messaging for the same:

There are several potential crises that STEs would most likely face. Having identified these, this procedural guide outlines a framework of sample messages that provide a starting point for communication. The sample messages can be tweaked depending on the nature of the crisis, its impact and specifics as they relate to each STE. Each sample message will provide specific information related to a potential situation.

*“...it is important to concisely communicate the facts in language that is clear, without ambiguity, and easy for your audience...”*

## Pre-impact: Slow Onset

### Category 1 Natural Hazards (Tropical Storm, Hurricane)

Business is located in the area that is forecast to be impacted by a tropical storm or hurricane.

#### Sample Messages:

- i. Our business will be closed for the following week due to the threat of [NAME OF HURRICANE/STORM]. The safety of our employees and guests is our highest priority. During this time, we will not be accepting guests. We apologize for any inconvenience and will be working with impacted guests to reschedule travel arrangements in accordance with our cancellation and rebooking policies. We look forward to reopening as quickly as possible following the passing of the storm and will keep you apprised of our status.
- ii. A hurricane/tropical storm has been forecasted to impact [AREA] on [FORECASTED DATES]. Please work with your manager on alternative working arrangements.
- iii. We are in the path of [NAME OF HURRICANE/STORM]. Remain vigilant and look for emergency alerts regarding evacuations, office closures and relevant instructions.
- iv. Due to the anticipated impact of [NAME OF HURRICANE/STORM] our property will be closed from [DATES]. We are working closely with [NAME ISLAND'S TOURISM AGENCY] to facilitate guests wishing to leave the island before the anticipated impact. Please contact [NAME OF ASSIGNED PERSON] to assist you with arrangements.

#### Sample messages 24 hours prior to impact of threat:

##### Internal Audience (IA)

- As [NAME OF HURRICANE/STORM] approaches, our office/property will be closed starting [DATE AND TIME]. Please monitor [local Disaster Management authority/agency] for updates. We will be in contact via the company's [MEDIUM USED - email and WhatsApp chat] for updates on business restoration. Please stay safe.

##### External Audience (EA)

- [NAME OF BUSINESS] will be closed to the public due to the anticipated passage of [NAME OF HURRICANE/STORM]. Our staff has provisioned the rooms of guests remaining on property and will be available in very limited capacity to assist guests during this time. Guests are encouraged to closely monitor developments via local [NEWS OUTLET] and/or [local Disaster Management authority/agency]. For emergencies, please contact [NUMBER] for assistance.

## Post-Impact - Rapid Onset (Little and no warning)

Examples of such an event would be an earthquake, accident or death of a guest on property/during service, or other scenario where there is little to no warning before impact.

### EARTHQUAKE

#### Internal Audience (IA)

- A magnitude [SIZE] earthquake occurred. There is no immediate evidence of structural damage; please contact your supervisor and secure your workspace. Further instructions will be forthcoming.

#### External Audience (EA)

- On [DATE and TIME], [NAME PROPERTY/ ISLAND LOCATION] was struck by a magnitude [SIZE] earthquake. At this time [NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES/GUESTS] have been accounted for. We are presently inspecting our facility to ensure the safety of staff and guests. Details on this assessment will be forthcoming.

### INCIDENT ON SITE

#### Internal Audience (IA)

- As you may be aware, at [TIME] today, there was a [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE INCIDENT] involving guests at/of [LOCATION/ACTIVITY]. Authorities are presently on-site investigating the matter. Please refrain from entering the area if you are not required to be in that location and be reminded of our employee handbook's policies, which restrict any sharing of information or pictures regarding such an incident. Thank you for your cooperation.

#### External Audience (EA)

- The management of [PROPERTY/SERVICE] wishes to advise that at [TIME] today, there was a [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE INCIDENT] involving guests at/of [LOCATION/ACTIVITY]. Authorities are presently on-site investigating the matter. Currently, service at [PROPERTY/SERVICE] is [TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED/NOT SUSPENDED]. As we monitor this unfolding situation, a later update will be provided on [MEDIUM] at [TIME]. Thank you.

## Post-crisis

- **Day of crisis - Immediately following**

1. Due to [NAME OF HURRICANE], our business is **temporarily closed**. Contact [MANAGER OF DEPARTMENT] for information about working remotely and when to return to the office.
2. If you are unable to travel to the office, please contact [MANAGER OR PERSONNEL] to discuss alternative working arrangements.
3. [NAME OF OFFICE] will remain closed until [DATE, TIME] due to the damage caused by [NAME OF HURRICANE]. Please follow local weather safety alerts.
4. If you are affected by [NAME OF HURRICANE], please contact [PERSON OF INTEREST] to find out how to receive assistance during this time of need.
5. For the latest updates on the impact of [NAME OF HURRICANE] at [NAME OF OFFICE], check out our company news [LINK TO WEBSITE].

- **6-12 hours after crisis**

**Limited Operations** - As you may know, on [Date Disaster Began], [Business Name] experienced a [Description of the Disruption]. Unfortunately, this event has affected our day-to-day operations, including services and/or products that we normally provide to you. We are working tirelessly to resume normal operations and apologize for any inconvenience this has caused. Please contact us at [Phone Number] or [Email Address] with any questions. We appreciate your understanding and look forward to resuming our service to you.

- **18-24 hours after crisis**

**Limited Operations** - All our employees are working tirelessly to recover from the [Description of the Disaster] in order to resume normal operations. [The Event] had a significant impact on our business [“and the community” If Applicable], and we hope to be able resume business as usual very soon. Providing the service, you expect and deserve remains our number-one priority. We again offer our apologies for any inconvenience. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact us at [Phone Number] or [Email Address].

- **36-48 hours after crisis**

We continue to prioritise our recovery efforts so that we can resume normal operations and be of service to you, our valued clientele. We anticipate that we will be able to reopen [Provide Time Frame] or given the extent of the impact of [The Event], we expect our recovery efforts to continue beyond the next [State number] days. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused and we look forward to serving/hosting you again soon.

- **7 days after crisis**

[Name of business] thanks you for your patience as we continue our recovery efforts following the passage of [Name of storm/hurricane or event]. We have completed/ are still engaged in our cleanup operations, following which we will undertake minor repairs as we prepare to welcome you again. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused but we assure you that your safety and that of our staff, remain of paramount importance. We anticipate being able to resume normal operations [State Projected Timeframe] and we look forward to providing you with our excellent service. See you soon.

- **After full recovery of business operations**

**FULL RESTORATION OF OPERATIONS** - We're happy to report that everything is back to normal at [Business Name] with all of our services being fully restored. We are working to enhance our continuity of operations procedures to minimize and eliminate, where possible, the effects from similar service interruptions. Thank you for remaining a loyal customer. As always, we welcome your questions and thoughts. Please contact us at [Phone Number] or [Email Address].



# General messages

## Internal Communication

Table 5: Examples of Internal Communications

Incident	Medium	Message
Disruption of Services - General	Guest Notes delivered to room	<p>We hope that you are enjoying your stay! We would like to provide you with the following information.</p> <p>Due to "reason", we have been experiencing "situation", hence, management has taken the decision to/ would like to inform you that "<i>identified service disruption</i>", for "duration of interruption" We do apologize for any inconvenience caused and offer our sincere thanks for your understanding and support.</p> <p>Sincerely, Management</p>
Beginning of Emergency Situation <u>not</u> Requiring Evacuation	Guest Notes delivered to room	<p>Thank you for choosing (name of business)! We would like to inform you that "<i>situation</i>". This morning/afternoon/evening "brief explanation of known reason for the occurrence". "Brief explanation of the means by which the situation is being rectified". We are sorry for any inconvenience caused and offer our sincere thanks for your understanding and support. Should you require any assistance or would like an update at any time, do not hesitate to contact our agents at (Front Desk, email address, number).</p> <p>Sincerely, Management</p>
Start of Emergency Situation Requiring Evacuation	Verbal	<p>Good Day Mr./Ms.</p> <p>We are currently experiencing "situation"/ "incident" has occurred. It requires us to assemble at the designated muster points immediately. Whilst there, you will be provided with further information and instructions. Please follow me to the Muster Point/ make your way to the Muster Point as quickly as you can.</p>
End of Emergency Situation	Verbal	<p>Good Day Mr./Ms.</p> <p>We would like to apologize for the inconvenience of the "<i>situation</i>" that you have experienced today. "Brief explanation of occurrence". "<i>Brief explanation of the means by which the situation was rectified</i>". We would like to thank you for your cooperation and understanding. Should you require any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact our agents at the Front Desk during the course of your stay.</p>

Incident	Medium	Message
End of Emergency Situation	Guest Email	<p>Good Day Mr./Ms.</p> <p>We would like to thank you for your patience during the difficulties experienced due to "situation" on/between "date". "Brief explanation of occurrence". "<i>Brief explanation of the means by which the situation was rectified</i>". We acknowledge that during this time you would have been inconvenienced and we would therefore like to offer you compensation in the form of "compensation"</p> <p>Sincerely, Management</p>



## External Communication

Messages which are shared publicly are very concise and include verbiage from the resort's slogans.

Table 6: Examples of External Communications

Incident	Medium	Type of Message	Message
Resort Closure	Social Media Guest Email	Main	Due to " <i>incident</i> " and in keeping with Government advisories/ due consideration for the safety of our guests and staff, [name of business] will be CLOSED from " <i>date</i> " to " <i>date</i> " inclusive.  We look forward to welcoming you back when restrictions are lifted/ the situation has been resolved.
	Social Media	Caption	E.g.  In light of the coronavirus pandemic, we are taking time to breathe (slogan). Stay put, stay safe, and see you soon.  Should you require our assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at (email), WhatsApp/Tel  or  The (name of facility) will experience closure until " <i>date</i> ". Take this time to breathe, and dream of your future stay.  Should you require our assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at: Email, WhatsApp/Tel
Reopening	Social Media Website	Main	Welcome Back to (name of facility) from " <i>date</i> ". Ask about our Special Offers and Packages.
	Social Media	Caption	We are reopening on " <i>date</i> "! Can't wait to welcome you home!

For further reading and additional information to boost the crisis communications capacity at your property, visit the CHTA website. <https://caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/publications/>





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## **APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE FOR SMALL TOURISM ENTERPRISES**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Purpose and intent
- 1.2 Scope
- 1.3 Objectives
- 1.4 Plan Review and Update

### **2.0 HAZARDS AND CRISES IDENTIFICATION**

- 2.1 Vulnerability Assessment

### **3.0 CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM**

- 3.1 Structure
- 3.2 Roles and responsibilities

### **4.0 CRISIS LEVEL DEFINITIONS**

### **5.0 CRISIS COMMUNICATION**

- 5.1 Message Development
- 5.2 Message Approval
- 5.3 Message Release
  - 5.3.1 Internal Communications
  - 5.3.2 External Communications
- 5.4 Media Monitoring

### **6.0 RESOURCES/APPENDICES**

- 6.1 Emergency Contact Lists
  - 6.1.1 Staff
  - 6.1.2 Business Partners
  - 6.1.3 Media/Influencer
- 6.2 Compilation of Company Collateral/ Important Information
- 6.3 Business Continuity Considerations for Utilities
- 6.4 Social Media Policy
- 6.5 Key Sample Messages
  - 6.5.1 Pre-impact: Slow Onset
  - 6.5.2 Post-Impact - Rapid Onset (Little and no warning)
  - 6.5.3 Post-crisis
- 6.6 General messages
  - 6.6.1 Internal Communications
  - 6.6.2 External Communications



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