Tourism Crisis Management Planning

A GUIDE FOR DESTINATION MANAGERS

You'll love every piece of Victoria

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why plan for a crisis?

Tourism plays an increasingly vital role throughout Victoria in terms of economic and social wellbeing, and must be nurtured as well as protected whenever possible.

Our tourism sector is especially vulnerable to the often unavoidable impacts of natural and man-made disasters and events, and this makes the implementation of activities to minimise their impacts particularly crucial.

Worldwide and local experience shows that when a crisis occurs, the absence of effective crisis preparation, response and recovery activities can be devastating to local businesses, towns and regions.

The lack of a planned, coordinated effort can significantly delay the restoration of a region's or town's ability to attract visitors and generate economic activity.

Sometimes incidents that cause a minor 'shock' to the tourism industry, if left unmanaged, can become increasingly problematic and result in a crisis.

A structured approach to crisis management is required so that you can quickly and effectively respond to crisis events to ensure that their impacts on the tourism industry are minimised.

Definition of a crisis

The underpinnings for this guidebook can be found in the definition of a crisis:

A crisis is a serious event that can be either perceived or real. A crisis disrupts normal activities and impacts negatively on the operations of a tourism business and/or region in the immediate to short term. Some emergency incidents may develop into a crisis.

A crisis can take a myriad of forms (man-made and natural) so begin to plan by imagining the worst-case scenario.

> For a list of potential tourism crisis events and possible strategic responses go to **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

The benefits of planning

Regional and local tourism organisations have a strong leadership role to play in supporting the tourism industry to recover after a crisis. A **Tourism Crisis Management Plan** developed with key stakeholders **in advance of a crisis event** is essential to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from a crisis event.

When a crisis occurs, implementing a Tourism Crisis Management Plan can:

- Minimise confusion amongst visitors about the crisis and support their safety;
- Increase understanding of the tourism industry's needs amongst stakeholders who are making decisions in response to the crisis, such as the emergency services agencies;
- Minimise misinformation in the media;
- Reduce booking cancellations and loss of business;
- Help to protect the region's brand/reputation;
- Increase the resilience of tourism operators to manage their business successfully through a crisis;
- Rapidly restore visitor confidence.

About this Guide

This guidebook contains information primarily to assist tourism destination managers to develop a Tourism Crisis Management Plan that is tailored to the needs of their area or region and which is adaptable to any crisis situation.

No two Tourism Crisis Management Plans will be the same as each region and destination will face different risks and potential impacts, and will require tailored management solutions.

The Guidebook includes recommendations for actions to take before a crisis (preparation), pre-response to a crisis (when advanced notice is provided), when responding to a crisis, and during the recovery phase (once a region/area is open for business again).

It also asks you to consider the needs of tourism businesses that are directly affected by a crisis (i.e. physical infrastructure of the business is affected) and indirectly affected (not physically affected but where business turnover is reduced as visitors are unable or unwilling to patronise the business or visit the region).

Major elements of effective crisis management planning include:

- The establishment of a crisis management team;

- An assessment of the most likely crisis scenarios;

- The development of a crisis management plan document;

- Periodic crisis training exercises;

- Adherence to crisis communication guidelines;

- Identification of resources to respond to a crisis; and

- Continual review and refinement of the plan.

Your Tourism Crisis Management Plan should be a working document – continually updated as the industry, the world and your organisation changes.

Latest updates and templates can be found at **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

The guidebook has been structure around the critical concepts and components of good crisis management planning, stimulate thinking about the crisis preparedness process, and identify appropriate recovery activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Your Tourism Crisis Management Plan

Introduction

Each section of this guide includes a brief statement about why this component is relevant to the Plan and outlines steps you can take to develop it. Tools, tips and templates are also provided to assist you.

Suggested structure

Following is an outline of what your Tourism Crisis Management Plan should include.

Sections in the Plan	What you need to do	Outcomes to document in your Plan
Purpose	Identify why you are developing this Plan	Paragraph on purpose
Context	Identify other emergency/crisis management plans that have been developed for the region or local area that this plan will need to link with.	Paragraph on context
Risk Assessment & Management	• Identify some crises that could potentially affect your region. • Identify and assess key risks and work out how you will address/minimise them. • Identify how you will respond to crises caused by key risks occurring.	• Crisis SWOT Analysis • Risk Assessment Tools • Actions to address risks • Crisis Scenario Planning Table
Key Partner Relationships	Identify relevant information about the roles of Tourism Victoria, local councils, and emergency service agencies in emergency management.	Information as relevant
A Co-ordinated Approach: Establishing a Tourism Crisis Management Group	• Identify what the TCMG's roles are and list members and key positions. • Identify other internal crisis management roles and contacts that will support the TCMG	• List of TCMG roles • List of TCMG members' names and contact details • List of other roles, names and contact details
Crisis Communications Developing a Communications Program	• Identify tourism industry stakeholders and audiences you may need to work with. • Identify communication tools available. • Identify sources of funding for a communications program.	• Relevant stakeholders and audiences • List of communications tools • Potential funding arrangements.

Sections in the Plan	What you need to do	Outcomes to document in your Plan
Crisis Communications		
Communications with Emergency Service Agencies	• Identify how you will support the work of emergency service agencies. • Identify what communications with emergency services you'll need to undertake during a crisis, and in the recovery phase.	• Communication actions for response and recovery phases • Tips for communication activities.
Communications with the Media	• Identify what communications with the media you'll need to undertake during a crisis, and in the recovery phase. • Identify protocols for working with the media • Work up proformas for communications pieces such as a media release, holding statement	• Communication actions for response and recovery phases • Tips for communication activities. • Media protocols and communications proformas
Communications with Industry and Other Stakeholders	• Identify relevant information about the roles of Tourism Victoria, local councils, and emergency service agencies in emergency management.	• Communication actions for response and recovery phases • Tips for communication activities.
Communications with Visitors	Identify what and how you'll need to communicate with visitors during a crisis, and in the recovery phase.	Communication actions for response and recovery phases
Impact Assessments	Identify how you will assess the impacts of the crisis on the tourism industry	Assessment surveys
Recovery Marketing Strategies	Identify generic recovery marketing strategies	Actions for recovery marketing
Preparing Tourism Businesses	• Identify how you will assist the tourism industry to be better informed about crisis management for their businesses. • Tourism Victoria resources available	Actions
Checklists	• Prepare a Pre-Response Checklist of activities. • Prepare a Response Checklist of activities • Prepare a Recovery Checklist of activities.	Checklists for Pre-response, Response and Recovery phases
Reviewing and Testing Your Plan	Identify how and when you will review, test and update your Plan.	Actions

How to prepare your plan

Preparing your Tourism Crisis Management Plan should involve bringing relevant organisations together to brainstorm the most appropriate way to handle crisis situations, and recording the results.

It is valuable to engage agencies and groups in the development of the Plan whom you may need to work with in the management of a crisis. This will help to:

- Inform your Plan with a range of expertise and new ideas;

- Increase understanding of the tourism industry's needs amongst participating organisations;

- Assist with the co-ordination of crisis/emergency management plans in the region;

- Gain the support of participating organisations and tourism businesses in the region; and

- Foster more effective implementation of the Plan.

The Emergency Management Manual Victoria states:

The process of planning is both educative and developmental. Production of a plan through a consultative process promotes a sense of involvement without which the document will be of less practical value to its users.

A well-managed planning process develops trust between agencies and individual officers, commits agencies to particular roles and helps develop shared goals.

The following are recommended steps for the preparation of a Tourism Crisis Management Plan.

Steps for preparing a Tourism Crisis Management Plan

1.	Identify any existing regional or local emergency plans.
2.	Identify the main organisations that will have a role, or be impacted upon, in the event of a crisis in the region.
3.	Conduct a workshop with representatives of these organisations and your Board to discuss the contents of your Plan, undertake a risk assessment and conduct crisis scenario planning.
4.	Prepare a draft Plan based on the sections outlined in this document.
5.	A second workshop may be required to refine the Plan's contents.
6.	Circulate the draft Plan to participating organisations and other relevant stakeholders for comment.
7.	Consult with tourism operators for feedback about proposed crisis management arrangements.
8.	Finalise the Plan and attain sign-off from the Board.
9.	Communicate the contents of the Plan to tourism businesses and other key stakeholders.
10.	Regularly review and practice the Plan.

Please note

In addition to preparing for a crisis that could affect the local/regional tourism industry, you should also identify how you will protect your staff and tourism organisation during a crisis and restore operations as quickly as possible. For further information, see Tourism Victoria's Open for Business: a comprehensive guide for crisis management for tourism businesses (tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis).

The plan's 'purpose'

It's important that the people preparing the Tourism Crisis Management Plan agree to the main intent of the document. The Plan's 'Purpose' should be a simple, clear statement about its function. For Instance:

To develop am integrated plan that will enable (insert organisation) to reduce the impact of local and regional crisis events on the region's tourism industry during the short, medium and long-term, and to restore tourism activity to pre-crisis levels.

- Obtain copies of plans from organisations who would be involved in managing crisis events most relevant to your region/local area.

- In your Plan, include a chart of organisations that are involved in crisis management in your region/local area.

- Explain how your Plan links with and supports these plans.

Provide context to your plan

The emergency services agencies, local councils and other key stakeholders in your area will have invariably prepared their own crisis/emergency management plans. These documents will provide context to your Plan and assist in identifying potential crisis scenarios.

Finding these plans will also help to connect you with local/regional services involved in emergency management. This can be useful as a starting point for formulating relationships with these organisations as you may need to work with them in the event of a crisis. These plans can also assist in identifying potential crisis scenarios etc.

Organisations that may have crisis/emergency management plans that are relevant to your Plan are:

- Emergency service agencies;

- Local councils;

- Department of Environment and Primary Industries;

- Parks Victoria;

- Water management authorities;

- Tourism Victoria;

- Other agencies depending on the potential crises relevant to your area; and

- Major tourist attractions/facilities in the region.

Risk Assessment
& Management

Introduction

Every region is vulnerable to risks that could create a crisis situation for the tourism industry. Some of these will be common between regions, such as the outbreak of a disease or a severe storm. Others will be based on the region's geography, climate and exposure to manmade impacts.

Being aware of the risks that are most likely to occur and which can create the greatest impacts on the tourism industry can help shape your preparation activities. Good preparation = faster recovery. An effective, well planned and managed response reduces the need for recovery activities (see Murray River Blue-Green Algal Bloom case study).

Identifying the risks

Conduct a crisis focused assessment of your region's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats - a SWOT analysis.

A crisis SWOT analysis should consider the following:

- Existing crisis management and control programmes

- Hazards within the region and incidences that can affect visitation and/or perceptions of the region. This could include roads being cut or fears about the safety of a location.

- Potential socio-political, economic, technological or environmental crises

- Existing relationships with the media, the public and emergency services.

> 📋 Record the SWOT analysis and risks you identify in your Plan, as shown in table 1.

Assessing the risks

To determine the level of risk related to each risk identified in the previous step consider:

- The consequence of the event on your region were it to occur – extreme, very high, medium or low. The consequences to your region will vary according to the size of the region, the diversity of markets and the markets most likely to be affected by the event.

- The likelihood of the event occurring – almost certain, likely, possible, unlikely or rare.

> 📋 • Identifying the risks most likely to affect your region will help you to prioritise the time and resources allocated towards planning for and managing each risk should it occur. Use the Consequence and Likelihood tables on the next page to help assess each identified risk.
>
> • Once this is complete, use in the Risk Assessment Tool on the next page to find your actual level of risk and record this in your Plan (Table 2).

Table 1. Crisis SWOT Analysis template

Strengths - Internal	Weaknesses - Internal
NB. Review in the Risk Assessment to determine if strengths could become weaknesses if the situation changed.	NB. Should be included in the Risk Assessment to change weaknesses into strengths or make them less of a weakness to the region.
Opportunities – Internal and External	**Threats - External**
	NB. Should be addressed in the Risk Assessment to see if Threats can be monitored, minimised or turned into an opportunity.

Source: Adapted from Tourism Northern Territory (n.d.) 'Tourism: It's a Risky Business'

Consequence Table [1]

Consequence	Description
Extreme	Threatens the survival of tourism in the region / local area. Loss of revenue is extreme.
Very High	Threatens the effective functionality of tourism in the region / local area and may require intervention. Loss of revenue is very high.
Medium	Tourism in the region / local area is not threatened, however could be subject to significant review or changed ways of operating. Loss of revenue is medium.
Low / Negligible	The consequences are dealt with by individual tourism businesses or by routine operations. Loss of revenue is low / negligible

[1] Adapted from Introduction to Risk Management, SAI Global Limited, 2009

Likelihood Table [2]

Likelihood of occurrence	Typical Events	Potential Crisis Risks
Almost certain	Expected frequency greater than twice a year	e.g. A power outage due to poor local supply
Likely	May happen once a year	e.g. A seasonal outbreak of blue-green algae in an adjacent lake
Possible	Once every few years	e.g. A flood event
Unlikely	Incident every three to five years	e.g. A bushfire during a period of drought
Rare	Once every few decades	e.g. Global economic crash - visitor numbers are at record lows due to a global economic downturn

[2] Adapted from Weatherproof Your Business, Tourism Queensland, 2009

Table 2. Risk Assessment Tool

Likelihood	Consequence				
	Negligible	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
Almost certain	H	H	E	E	E
Likely	M	H	H	E	E
Possible	L	M	H	E	E
Unlikely	L	L	M	H	E
Rare	L	L	M	H	H

[3] Introduction to Risk Management, SAI Global Limited, 2009

E - Extreme risk; immediate action required
H - High risk; senior management attention required
M - Moderate risk; management responsibility must be specified
L - Low risk; manage by routine procedures

Managing the risks

Where possible, action should be taken to address the events that are assessed as posing the highest level of risk to your region. Addressing an identified risk may involve:

- Working with relevant organisations to reduce the consequence or impact of the risk to an acceptable level (e.g. if the risk incident commonly occurs, prioritise marketing on seasons where the incident is less likely to occur.)

- Transferring the risk by sharing it with other parties (e.g. agreeing with a neighbouring region on how you might assist each other in the event of a crisis such as shifting bookings where agreed with clients, sharing office space or IT equipment and so on.)

- Reducing exposure to risk by making changes in processes or practices.

> Outline the actions that need to take place to address identified risks. Detail the timeline for actions to occur and allocate responsibility.
>
> Download Risk Management Actions template from **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

Consider whether the actions to be undertaken introduce any element of new risk. If they do, follow through the steps again to consider how the risk may be minimised.

Crisis scenario planning

Work through some scenarios based on the events that are assessed as posing the highest level of risk to your region - what would your responses be if the event occurred? Consider the responses for crises directly impacting the region, and where the crisis occurs elsewhere but indirectly affects the region.

Document these in a Scenario Planning Table (example below) and allocate responsibilities and timeframes.

> Document these in the Scenario Planning Table template, example below, and allocate responsibilities and timeframes. This information may be useful to inform your crisis communications activities (see Crisis Communications section).

Table 3. Scenario Planning Template

Potential Risk / Hazard: Eg. Flood		
Action Area	**Roles / Tasks**	**Responsibility**

Key Partner Relationships

Introduction

This section provides background information about the roles of your key partners in managing a crisis, including how emergency management is structured in Victoria and the key agencies involved. It is crucial to understand who your regional or local tourism organisation should interact with in the event of a crisis, or as part of this planning process.

Tourism Victoria

Working with the emergency services agencies

Tourism Victoria maintains a strong formal and informal working relationship with the emergency service agencies and related State Government departments (planning, communications and operational). Formally, it is a permanent member of the State Fire Management Planning Committee, the State Emergency Management Team (SEMT) and the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC).

On a needs basis, Tourism Victoria is also required to be represented on the Victorian Government Fire and Emergency Communication Committee which oversees the development and delivery of the State Government's Bushfire Safety campaign and other emergency communications.

Additionally, Tourism Victoria is invited to participate in specific crisis-related Whole of Government taskforces, such as the Locust Plague Communications Taskforce.

Membership of these committees provides a valuable conduit for ongoing dialogue and rapport with senior emergency services personnel on issues impacting the industry. The committees also provide a crucial source of intelligence before and during a crisis event.

It also continually monitors media (national and international) and regularly liaises with senior emergency services personnel and regional tourism managers to identify potential crisis events.

Tourism Victoria is the primary tourism industry conduit to the emergency services agencies at the State level as a result of its membership of these committees.

Regional advice and support

Tourism Victoria provides assistance and advice to local and regional tourism managers, in conjunction with the Regional Tourism Boards, on crisis management through a suite of activities including:

- Specific advice and training on the formation and on-going activities of a Tourism Crisis Management Group or similar coordination body.

- Subject to funding, conducts crisis media training for regional tourism stakeholders responsible for dealing with media in a crisis.

- On a needs basis, in partnership with the responsible Government agency, conducts training on impending or potential crisis events.

In the event that it receives warning that an incident is expected to occur, Tourism Victoria will enact its pre-response phase, including advising the relevant regional tourism manager of the potential threat. Examples include: extreme weather forecasts and associated risks (such bushfires and floods); an expected insect plague; or a disease outbreak in a nearby country, which could potentially spread to Australia. Note, depending upon the incident, it is not always possible to be forewarned of the upcoming situation.

Tourism business advice and support

If the incident is at a State level, Tourism Victoria leads the tourism response and recovery effort, in consultation with relevant government departments/agencies and industry associations. This role includes the establishment of a State Tourism Crisis Management Group.

Tourism Victoria also provides advice and support to tourism businesses to enable them to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis events (see Preparing Tourism Businesses section).

All of these activities are outlined in Tourism Victoria's internal Crisis Manual. It outlines specific actions and duties for Tourism Victoria staff.

Emergency service agencies

There are many emergency service agencies in Victoria that specialise in preparing for, and responding to, specific emergency situations. There is not and could not be a single organisation solely and totally responsible for dealing with all aspects of emergencies. (See Table 3 for a list of emergency services agencies in Victoria)

Victoria's emergency management arrangements are designed to deal with all hazards, including terrorism.

The Emergency Management Act 1986 (the Act) provides the legislative framework for Victoria's emergency management arrangements and assigns significant roles and responsibilities. The Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) is the comprehensive document supporting the Act, which contains Victoria's principal emergency management policies and planning arrangements, including details about the roles different organisations play in the arrangements.

The three components of managing emergencies are:

• Prevention

• Response

• Recovery

Of particular importance is understanding which agency or organisation is the nominated control agency for emergencies that are relevant to your region's identified potential crisis events, and understanding what planning is in place to mitigate or respond to that event.

The most important emergency management activity that you can undertake in advance of a crisis is to establish relationships with the relevant emergency service agency or agencies. This will foster greater understanding of issues that affect the tourism industry during particular types of crises, and encourage consultative and inclusive decision-making processes.

In particular, you are encouraged to contact the relevant emergency service agencies to assist you with your crisis management planning, particularly the identification of potential crisis events. Seeking input for the development of the Plan would greatly assist in the building of stakeholder relationships if they do not already exist and provide expert advice.

Conversely, you may wish to contribute to the development of the relevant emergency service agency plan/s to ensure that tourism is considered in these plans.

Additionally, depending on the nature and scale of the crisis, you may be invited to be part of a Regional Emergency Management Team. This opportunity will provide a valuable conduit for ongoing dialogue and rapport with senior emergency services personnel and provide a crucial source of intelligence.

Tourism Victoria can assist you in identifying the appropriate regional contact within the relevant control agency.

Working with emergency services agencies at the regional level will help the Tourism Crisis Management Group (see next section) define the roles that a regional tourism organisation can play in response to a crisis event.

Please note

Certain tourism crisis events such as media exposure of repeated bad service, poor tourist experiences, or high profile criticism such as from a celebrity may fall outside the established emergency management arrangements.

> 1. Incorporate relevant elements of the information above into your Plan as background material.
>
> 2. Document relationship building activities, agreed role, responsibilities, etc. into your Plan.
>
> Download an up to date list of emergency services agencies in Victoria from **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

Table 3. Emergency Services Agencies in Victoria

Emergency Incident	Emergency Service Agency	Contact phone	Website
Air Pollution	Environment Protection Authority	Ph. 1300 372 842	epa.vic.gov.au
Blue Green Algae	Department of Environment & Primary Industries	Ph. 136 186	depi.vic.gov.au
Disease Outbreak	Department of Health	Ph. 1300 364 352	health.vic.gov.au
Drought	Department of Environment & Primary Industries	Ph. 136 186	depi.vic.gov.au
Earthquake	Victoria State Emergency Services	Ph. 132 500	ses.vic.gov.au
Flooding	Victoria State Emergency Services	Ph. 132 500	ses.vic.gov.au
Food Poisoning	Department of Health	Ph. 1300 364 352	health.vic.gov.au
Hazardous Materials	Country Fire Authority	Ph. 000	cfa.vic.gov.au
	Metropolitan Fire Brigade	Ph. 000 (reporting)	mfb.vic.gov.au
Landslides	Victoria State Emergency Services	Ph. 132 500	ses.vic.gov.au
Major Crime	Victoria Police	Ph. 000	police.vic.gov.au
Major Transport Accident	Victoria Police	Ph. 000	police.vic.gov.au
Oil Spill	Environment Protection Authority	Ph. 1300 372 842	epa.vic.gov.au
Other threats against persons, property or environment	Victoria Police	Ph. 000	police.vic.gov.au
Pest Plagues	Department of Environment & Primary Industries	Ph. 136 186	depi.vic.gov.au
Severe Storm	Victoria State Emergency Services	Ph. 132 500	ses.vic.gov.au
Terrorist Incident	Victoria Police	Ph. 000	police.vic.gov.au
Water Pollution	Environment Protection Authority	Ph. 1300 372 842	epa.vic.gov.au
Fire/Bushfire	Country Fire Authority	Ph. 000 (reporting) Ph. 1800 240 667 (updates)	cfa.vic.gov.au
	Department of Environment & Primary Industries	Ph. 1800 240 667 (updates)	depi.vic.gov.au
	Metropolitan Fire Brigade	Ph. 000 (reporting)	mfb.vic.gov.au

Current as of July 2013

Local government and emergency management

Your local council/s has a wide range of roles to play in planning for and responding to an emergency. It works in cooperation with key State government emergency management agencies such as the police, fire authorities, ambulance services and VICSES, to ensure a coordinated approach to emergency events and a safer outcome for communities.

Municipal councils are required to appoint committees to plan for the use of municipal resources in emergency management. They are also required to appoint a municipal emergency resources officer and a municipal recovery manager to coordinate the allocation of council resources in emergencies.

Each council is required by law to prepare a Municipal Emergency Management (MEM) Plan. This plan must consider each potential emergency situation and develop generic principles and arrangements that can be activated in any emergency situation. A MEM Plan records a municipality's emergency management arrangements and includes:

- Key geographic and demographic information about the municipal district;

- The results of emergency risk analyses performed;

- Outlines of risk reduction strategies;

- Information about public awareness and education campaigns and other actions taken to increase community resilience;

- Arrangements for the management of response and recovery activities;

- Contact lists of key council staff and other personnel needed during an emergency; and

- Information on access to resources owned or controlled by the council, which are available for prevention, response and recovery activities, including the contact details of suppliers.

The MEM Plan is a valuable source of information about which risks are relevant to your region.

Victoria Tourism Industry Council

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is the peak body for Victoria's tourism and event industry. VTIC stands for and works to support a professional, sustainable and globally competitive tourism industry in Victoria.

In partnership with Tourism Victoria and the emergency services agencies, VTIC plays an important support role in assisting its members to prepare for, respond to and recover from a crisis event. This role includes supporting Tourism Victoria in the delivery of its crisis preparedness activities, communicating official emergency information to its members and the collection of industry intelligence to inform Tourism Victoria and the emergency services agencies' response to a crisis event.

In the event of a statewide crisis, VTIC will be represented on the State Tourism Crisis Management Group.

VTIC may also lobby government for resources to assist regions affected by a crisis event.

Regional tourism boards/organisations

Regional tourism boards/organisations have a strong leadership role to play in supporting the tourism industry to prepare, respond and recover from a crisis event. This role includes establishing, actively participating in and supporting (in-kind and financial) the Tourism Crisis Management Group and associated activities.

In most cases, the RTB executive officer will represent the tourism industry on the Regional Emergency Management Team, act as the key tourism media spokesperson and is the primary regional liaison point with Tourism Victoria and other key industry stakeholders.

Local government tourism Managers/Officers

Local government tourism managers and officers play an important support role in assisting the RTB and TCMG prepare, respond and recover from a crisis event. This role includes the collection of impact intelligence at the business level, the local coordination of business crisis preparedness activities, facilitating the dissemination of official emergency information to visitors and tourism businesses and, in most cases, representing council on the TCMG.

They also play an important linking role between the TCMG and other areas of Council (including Mayor's office and the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre) as well as the local tourism liaison point for the incident controller and should contribute to the development of council's MEMPlan.

A Coordinated Approach

Introduction

A coordinated response to a crisis is a prerequisite if a region is to be portrayed with a sense of reassurance, control and, if appropriate, a 'business as usual' message to its potential audiences. Tourism recovery efforts can be hindered by a perception that there are too many tourist organisations and associations purporting to speak for 'tourism'.

A Tourism Crisis Management Group (TCMG) performs a vital role in overseeing the implementation of your Plan when a crisis occurs. Its members are appointed on the basis of their expertise and linkages with other organisations which can help guide the tourism industry's response to, and recovery from, a crisis.

When appointed and organised in advance of a crisis, a TCMG will be in a position to respond quickly, knowledgeably and efficiently to reduce the impact of the event on the tourism industry.

A TCMG will oversee crisis management preparation, pre-response, response and recovery activities for the region's tourism industry. It should include representatives from your tourism organisation and other relevant agencies.

Roles of the Tourism Crisis Management Group

The roles of the TCMG include:

- Develop a Tourism Crisis Management Plan prior to an event occurring.

- Implement the plan.

- Update and practise the Plan.

- Get involved in emergency planning at the regional level to ensure that the tourism industry's requirements are incorporated into planning arrangements, such as the safety of visitors.

- Initiate response and recovery activities in the event of a crisis, especially a communications strategy targeting visitor markets and the media to manage public perceptions of the region.

- Handle media inquiries.

- Monitor and respond to the tourism industry's needs.

- Coordinate/facilitate tourism business crisis preparedness activities, in partnership with Tourism Victoria and the emergency services.

For more information about TCMG key roles and responsibilities see table 4.

Membership

Membership of the Tourism Crisis Management Group may include:

- Your regional or local tourism organisation - selected Board members and staff

- Local government agencies (representatives responsible for tourism)

- Tourism Victoria

- Emergency service agencies (police, emergency services, fire, health, other) depending on the potential emergency events relevant to your region.

You may like to bring in other personnel relevant to a particular crisis on an as-needs basis. Some TCMGs leave 1-2 positions vacant which they fill after a crisis depending on the nature of the event and the expertise required.

It is important that the group operates efficiently for rapid decision-making. Often TCMGs have around six to eight members.

Staff supporting the work of the TCMG, such as a Media Officer and Information Officer, may be appointed from within your tourism organisation or contracted externally.

When appointing TCMG members, it's important to ask:

- Do they have the knowledge and time to be part of the group?

- Who is a back-up person for each group member if they are not available during a crisis?

Include the details of your TCMG members in your Tourism Crisis Management Plan and ensure this information is accessible to all members at all times.

Support staff for the TCMG

Roles required to support the functions of the TCMG include:

- Information Officer
- Media Officer
- Executive Assistant

Identify who will undertake these roles and document this in your Plan.

See Table 4 for suggested actions that are indicative of the responsibilities and actions that should be assigned within the TCMG.

TCM training

Ensure the Tourism Crisis Management Group is trained and ready to respond

Ask yourself, does the TCMG have the capacity to deal with the crisis situations the region may face? By their nature, crises are confusing and pressured environments to work in.

The TCMG will need to practise the response to potential crises scenarios periodically so group members understand what is needed of them prior to an event occurring.

Practice will allow the TCMG to:

- Improve their response (the first 5 minutes can make all the difference)
- Improve co-ordination with relevant agencies
- Plan for not having a critical member of the group available (e.g. media spokesperson).

- Appoint a TCMG and document members' names, contact details and key positions.
- Document the TCMG's roles.
- Appoint support staff and include their contact details, or identify if you will outsource these roles.
- Include actions, and identify responsibilities and timeframes to:
  - Maintain an up-to-date database of contacts for TCMG members.
  - Ensure that each member has a copy of these contact details.
  - Advise the region's tourism businesses about the TCMG's members and its roles.

Conduct training of TCMG members in crisis response.

Table 4. TCMG Key Roles and Responsibilities

Chair/Deputy Chair

1. Make an initial assessment of the probable scale of the crisis.

2. Activate the TCMG and arrange for members to be contacted.

3. Arrange for verbal/written briefing on situation status for TCMG.

4. Determine the TCMG's support requirements.

5. Decide what extra specialist personnel should be involved in the TCMG eg: issues and crisis management consultants.

6. In conjunction with TCMG members, determine resource requirements to effectively address the crisis.

7. Advise senior stakeholders eg: Minister, Tourism Victoria, as required.

8. Refer to Crisis Communications Plan and determine what is applicable.

9. Immediately revise, cancel or suspend advertising.

10. In conjunction with TCMG members, initiate immediate actions required.

11. In conjunction with TCMG members, determine media strategy and authorise all media statements on the crisis.

12. Act as regional spokesperson regarding tourism issues for significant media interviews

13. Authorise regular situation updates for visitors, regional tourism operators and staff, other relevant stakeholders.

14. Coordinate planning for longer term recovery.

15. Once crisis has passed, commission external review of the effectiveness of the Crisis Communications plan and other actions taken.

Information & Strategy

1. Establish and maintain contact with emergency response team for regular information updates.

2. Feed authoritative information into the TCMG.

3. Assess immediate implications for regional tourism, including initial economic impacts

4. Canvass any immediate actions required.

5. Determine key themes and messages for all communications.

6. Determine most appropriate tools of communications to reach key stakeholders and audiences.

7. Coordinate regular stakeholder information updates.

8. Review any proposed media statements or releases.

9. Contribute to the effective operation of the TCMG.

10. Participate in debrief process and advise on gaps in provision and dissemination of information.

Planning

1. Assess potential implications for regional tourism.

2. Start planning process to mitigate potential impacts.

3. Consult with regional tourism operators as appropriate.

4. Consider need to reschedule/make special preparations for any upcoming public events (eg seminars, conferences etc).

5. Assist with media and website management.

6. Contribute to the effective operation of the TCMG.

7. Once crisis is over, participate in debrief process.

8. As required, update procedures and coordinate stakeholder de-briefings.

9. If appropriate, send letters of appreciation to relevant staff and organisations that assisted the TCMG.

Media Management

1. Liaise with Media Officers of emergency response agencies.

2. Arrange for all media inquiries regarding tourism to be handled or forwarded immediately.

3. In conjunction with TCMG members, determine strategic approach to answering media inquiries and the proactive release of information.

4. Respond to media inquiries in a calm, measured and reassuring manner, as quickly as practicable.

5. If necessary, explain why more details are not immediately available.

6. Monitor all media coverage, immediately alert TCMG of significant issues.

7. Maintain a log of journalists making inquiries.

8. Monitor extent and tone of media coverage.

9. Determine appropriateness of issuing a holding statement and draft if necessary.

10. Authorise extra public affairs support eg: other agencies, consultants, if required.

11. Brief Chair in advance of media commitments.

12. Draft media statements and website updates for authorisation by TCMG.

13. Review all media statements prior to release to assess implications.

14. Provide background information to media as required.

15. Carefully manage all media events.

16. Correct any factual errors or misperceptions reported by the media.

17. If appropriate, and only in consultation with the TCMG, respond to any potentially damaging claims by third parties.

18. Participate in debrief once the crisis is resolved.

TCMG activation and de-activation

Depending on the scale and nature of the incident, it may not be necessary to activate the full TCMG in response to a crisis event. For instance, a localised incident may only require coordination between the regional tourism manager, local tourism association representative and local council representative. The level of activation should be based on the initial assessment (refer to Impact Assessment section) and in consultation with Tourism Victoria.

The following indicators should be considered when choosing an appropriate level of response (table 5). However, this is a general guide only and is not designed to be a prescriptive list. The level of response chosen depends on the specific incident and needs to be decided on a case by case basis.

Table 5. Indicators for Establishing Level of Response

Local	Regional (Activate Full TCMG)
Incident occurs in a localised area only	Incident occurs covering a significant part of the region.
Limited safety risk for visitors and locals	Extreme health or safety risk for visitors and locals Fatalities
Restrictions on visitor access to local area only. Other parts of the region remain safe and accessible	Potential recovery efforts required for the tourism industry within a single region e.g. significant environmental or infrastructure damage present within region
Little or local media coverage	Significant Melbourne metropolitan media coverage, although limited world media coverage.
Little or no financial impact on tourism businesses (i.e. limited booking cancellations)	Potential financial impact on tourism businesses within a single region (i.e. widespread booking cancellations)
Little or no impact to brand	Potential to impact on regional brand

One of the more important judgements to make is when to deactivate the TCMG. A premature winding down of the group may run the risk of drawing negative criticism from tourism industry stakeholders. While the timing will vary depending on the nature of the crisis, the responsibility for long term strategic recovery activities should transfer to the relevant regional tourism board/association at the completion of the TCMG's tactical recovery activities.

Communication channels between TCMG should be maintained on as-needs basis. During the recovery phase, the TCMG should meet to debrief and review the crisis management plan and update it accordingly.

Crisis Communications
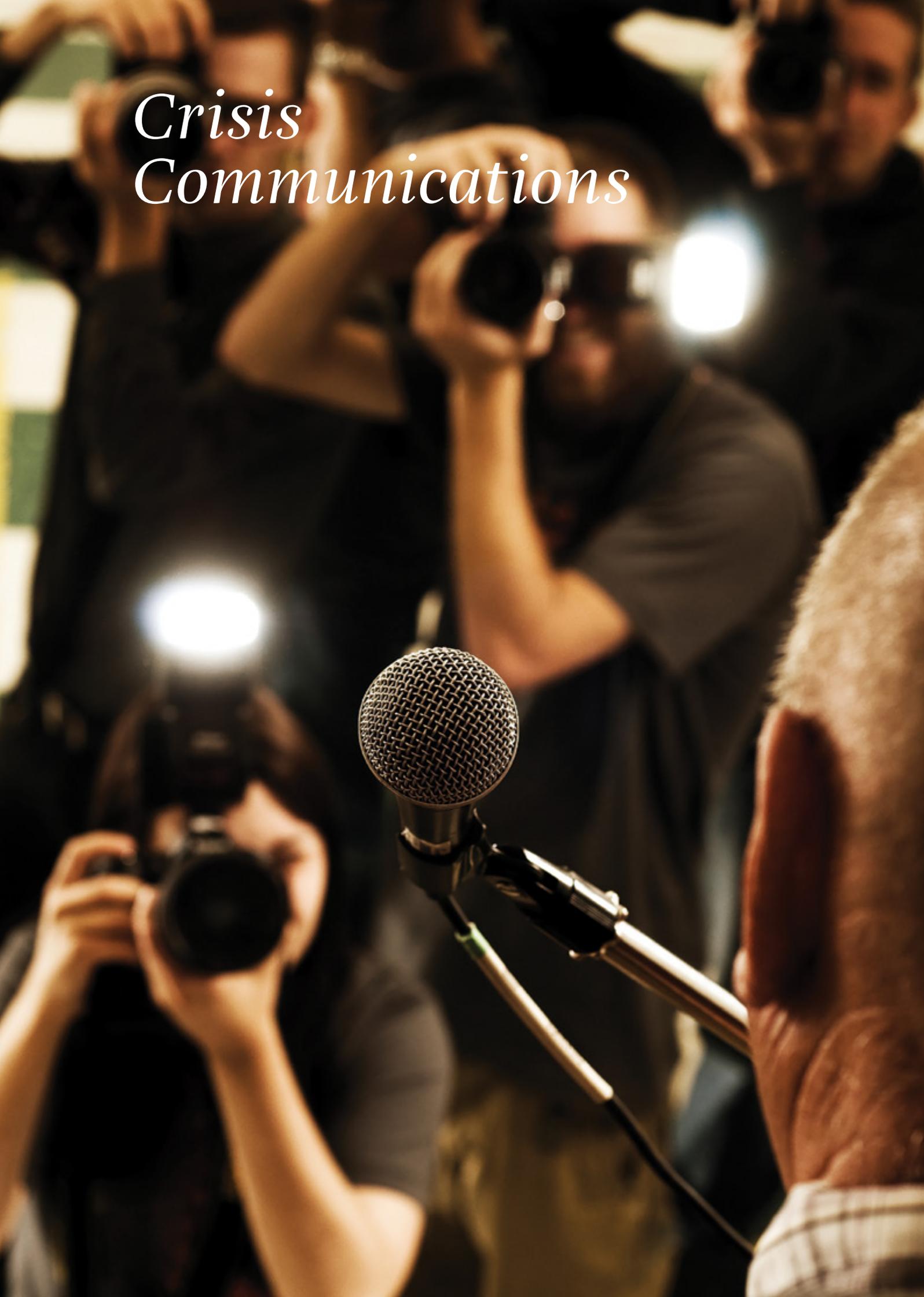
Introduction

Every disaster or crisis will attract unwelcome attention of varying degrees, with the potential to impact negatively on visitors' perceptions regarding personal safety, suitability of access, availability of accommodation and the likelihood of disruption to travel plans. Furthermore, the nature of media coverage means that often the seriousness and extent of incidents may be magnified, or even distorted, through the lens of a television camera or the words of a newspaper reporter.

These factors underline the benefit of a planned, considered communications response that seeks to put an issue into perspective, reassures observers about the measures taken to control and address the situation, and fully explains the true extent of the crisis.

Developing a communications program

Knowing to whom, what and how you need to communicate after a crisis is a critical step in responding to a crisis. This is the most important element in managing public perceptions after a crisis, as well as ensuring there is united industry support for the recovery process, and strong government backing. All of these elements need to be brought together for the speedy recovery of tourism.

Thinking about this for the first time when a crisis occurs is a challenging task. It's much easier is to have a program of communication activities that you can use as a guide and update to reflect the specifics of the crisis event.

Tools of Communication

When developing a communications program, there is a variety of tools to choose from depending on the audience/stakeholder group. Here are some suggestions:

- Media releases
- Holding statement
- Media conferences
- Media interviews
- Central contact point for media
- Websites - consumer and industry
- Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms
- Email blasts
- Fact sheets
- Advisory notices/update bulletins
- Visitor information centres
- Local visitor radio
- Telephone calls
- Switchboard scripts
- Meetings/industry briefings
- Letters
- Newspaper notices
- Advertising
- 1800 number

> Consider how you would communicate if the internet and/or telephone functions were down.

Resourcing

As crises tend to be unplanned and arrive without warning, they are rarely accommodated in our budgets! However, as a result of an event, a TCMG may need to respond quickly to changed visitor perceptions of the region or to correct misinformation that is circulating, which can require immediate access to funds for communications activities.

You might want to appoint extra temporary staff, contract a public relations company or implement new marketing campaigns.

Conversely, funds may be required to maintain "business as usual" activities while key staff members are managing the crisis event.

To do this, it is useful to have a plan to access funds quickly - this might be funds put aside for the purpose, or a Board agreement that funds can be diverted from other programs.

Note your anticipated funding source in your Plan.

> - Include the Initial Crisis Assessment Checklist (see Impact Assessment section) in your Plan as a guide to inform your communications activities.
> - Prepare a Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix targeting the relevant key stakeholders and audiences (see Table 6).
> - Identify a source/s of funding for communications activities.

Stakeholders and Audiences

It is acknowledged that effective stakeholder communications play a critical role in the tourism recovery process for regions affected by a disaster and other high-impact events. During a crisis, and in its immediate aftermath, open lines of communications should be established with internal and external stakeholder and audiences to avoid misunderstandings and damaging speculation. The type and severity of the crisis will determine which stakeholder and audiences are involved.

Stakeholders

Tourism industry stakeholders you may need to work with include:

- Tourism Victoria
- Victorian Tourism Industry Council
- Local Governments
- Regional Tourism Organisations
- Local Tourism Associations
- Regional Economic Development Boards
- Visitor Information Centres
- Industry and Trader Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Tourism operators
- Tourism Australia.

There are a number of emergency management organisations you may need to work with.

> For an up to date list of emergency services agencies in Victoria go to
> **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

Audiences

Audiences you may need to communicate with include:

- Current visitors (and potentially their families elsewhere)
- Potential visitors
- Media – both local and further afield
- Local tourism operators

- Local tourism employees
- Local community
- Local MPs
- Local business community
- Tourism Victoria
- Intrastate/interstate travel industry
- International tour operators/wholesalers
- Charter bus companies
- Federal, State and local Governments – Tourism Ministers
- Relevant Commonwealth Departments
- Tourism Australia
- Diplomats – if foreign nationals are involved

Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix

The TCMG should develop a Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix that outlines for each of your stakeholder and audience groups:

- What methods of communication would be suitable;
- When and how often a piece of communication about the crisis should be distributed;
- Key messages/information that will be required; and
- Who will undertake the tasks.

Devise your program to respond to the greatest risks to your region identified in Risk Assessment & Management section.

See table 6 for a sample Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix.

For suggestions related to communications for a variety of different types of crisis events download Potential Crises and Possible Strategic Responses summary from **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

While your Tourism Crisis Management Plan should contain a Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix to guide your communications activities, when a crisis occurs this should be updated to a crisis-specific action plan.

> For a summary of potential crisis events and possible strategic responses go to
> **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

Table 6: Sample Stakeholder and Audience Communications Matrix

Audience / Stakeholder Group	Responsibility	Method	Timing and Frequency	Information Needs
TCMG members	Chair	Phone Email Industry bulletins Media releases	Immediately, then every two days, then weekly as required	The nature and extent of the crisis. Industry Impact information Communications activities for all audience / stakeholder groups
Emergency service agencies	Information Officer	Phone Email	Immediately, then every two days, then weekly as required	Key messages to visitors and media
Tourism businesses	Information Officer	Industry bulletins Media releases Briefings / meetings	Initially within two days then every 5-7 days as required	The nature and extent of the crisis and suggested alternatives and key information for visitors Response and recovery activities
Tourism Victoria,	Chair	Phone Email	Initially within two days then weekly as required	The nature and extent of the crisis Industry Impact information Key messages for stakeholder dialogue.
Tourism industry and Travel trade	Information Officer	Industry bulletins	Initially within two days then fortnightly as required	The nature and extent of the crisis and Tourism Victoria's response to the crisis
Intermediaries, eg. VICs, car rental companies, etc.	Information Officer	Email	Initially within two days then fortnightly as required	The nature and extent of the crisis and suggested alternatives and key information for visitors
Consumer/ General public	Media Officer Information Officer	Consumer websites (local, regional, state) Travel bulletins Social media	Initially within two days then fortnightly as required	Up-to-date factual information and alternative activities and locations, preferably within the region
Media	Media Officer	Holding statement Media release Media interviews	Initially within two days then fortnightly as required	Up-to-date factual information and alternative activities and locations, preferably within the region

Communications with emergency service agencies

It is also important to establish communication processes with emergency service agencies so your local/regional tourism organisation and TCMG are advised of the latest information about an event.

Alert Systems

It is imperative to set up arrangements with these agencies to be alerted as early as possible about an impending incident or occurrence that could affect the tourism industry, as well as the safety of your tourism organisation.

Alerts to TCMG members

An alert system should be in place to communicate relevant emergency service alerts to all TCMG members. Identify a protocol to guide how TCMG members will be contacted about an emergency incident, and note this in your Plan.

Incident Media Management

Media management at any incident, including access and safety for media representatives, is the responsibility of the control agency. The incident controller should ensure that current and accurate information is available.

Warnings, or the release of other public information which the response co-ordinator deems necessary, must be cleared by the incident controller prior to dissemination.

Visitor information and advice released by the TCMG must be consistent with that released by these bodies and must not interfere with the operational management of the situation.

At the same time, the TCMG's network of tourism businesses and accommodation providers can prove invaluable for the dissemination of urgent information to regional visitors – particularly those visitors who do not have the benefit of local knowledge.

Supporting the region's emergency response

The TCMG can play a valuable role supporting the work of emergency service agencies by:

- Providing links on your tourism organisation's industry and consumer website/s to communicate up-to-date information about the crisis situation;
- Responding to visitor enquiries about future bookings/cancellations;

- Providing information about the region including recovery progress;
- Communicating information to the media about visitor safety and security;
- Sharing and co-ordinating emergency/crisis management plans.

Document relevant actions for these roles in your Plan, and allocate timeframes and responsibilities.

- Include actions to develop relationships with relevant emergency service agencies (reflecting key risk areas) and organise alert systems with these agencies.

- Confirm the protocol for contacting TCMG members once an emergency alert has been issued. Include the protocol in your Plan.

- Include actions that identify how the TCMG will communicate crisis updates from emergency service agencies to tourism operators and visitors.

Working with the Key Media Spokesperson

In most cases, a senior representative of the relevant emergency services agency will act as the primary media spokesperson for the incident and become its 'public face' in the media.

Depending on the type of incident, the key spokesperson at a regional level may be the regional incident controller, local Mayor or a local Member of Parliament.

In the initial response phase, the key media spokesperson will be under pressure to gather information and keep the public informed about the incident. During this phase, it is unlikely that the media will be interested in positive news stories about the affected area.

The best strategy therefore is to work with the key spokesperson or their support staff to integrate your key tourism messages into their messaging when appropriate. By working together, your messages are more likely to be reported by the media and will ensure that your messages do not contradict any public safety messages. This will show a united front and a consistent message.

If the incident lasts for an extended period of time, you may like to undertake some strategic communications planning with the key media spokesperson's team.

Communications with the media

Working with the media in a crisis

Understanding how best to work with the media during a crisis is an essential skill in crisis management. Once a crisis has occurred, it's often too late to improve your media skills and to put protocols in place.

In the event of a crisis, the media should be regarded as a useful vehicle to communicate with visitors, potential visitors and the wider community. It offers an opportunity rather than a threat.

The TCMG will play an important role in managing public perceptions after a crisis and how the region is responding to it. Being heard and understood cannot be left to chance. Therefore, all media interaction should be calm and measured in order to convey a sense of control and preparation.

- Always remember that the media is well resourced and will not go away. Journalists have a job to do and will do it – with or without your help.

- Know what you are talking about.

- Many key audiences and stakeholders such as visitors, potential visitors, governments, regulatory bodies and so on will often gain their first (and lasting) impressions through media reports.

- Trust, integrity and good faith are vital components when liaising with the media, particularly in times of crisis. This underlines the requirement for the release of only authoritative, reliable information.

- Regular updates will serve to counter speculation and misunderstandings.

- The TCMG must be upfront, even regarding bad news, if it is to be relied upon, and given credence by the media for an official position. Often, bad news can be tempered by emphasising the actions taken to address it and by putting the matter into its full context.

- Furthermore, all reasonable media requests should be accommodated as quickly as possible in order to disseminate factual details and to position the region's tourism industry as being open and responsible, and working in the best interests of its customers.

- The nature and timing of the TCMG media response must be guided by the extent of the crisis or incident.

- In some cases, particularly those that require sensitivity such as the loss of life, it will be advisable to wait until an appropriate time before issuing anything other than essential factual advice for travellers.

Media Protocols

A consistent, strategic and carefully managed approach to media interaction is absolutely vital in the event of a crisis. The manner in which the region is perceived to respond to a crisis will be remembered long after the crisis itself has passed.

The region's tourism organisations must be portrayed as responsible, professional and responsive, placing the interests of the community as well as visitors first and foremost. They must also be seen to be open and accountable.

For this reason, it is essential that all media contact by the tourism industry conforms to the following protocols:

- Identify a media spokesperson for the TCMG (usually the Chair) as the sole person who speaks to the media on behalf of the TCMG. This will ensure consistency of message and style. See table 7 for Media Interview Guidelines.

> It is recommended that the TCMG spokesperson (and a back-up person) undertake media training prior to a crisis event occurring. If this has not been undertaken, include a relevant action in your Tourism Crisis Management Plan

- All initial media queries and requests should be referred back to the control agency (which is often an emergency services agency but not always) who is dealing with the crisis or incident, unless there is a specific tourism focus. They should then be handled by the TCMG spokesperson.

- No speculation or unauthorised comments should be made on any basis.

- All subsequent media queries and requests must be transferred or directed to the TCMG.

- The TCMG should be notified as soon as practicable about any media contact.

- If media attend the scene of a crisis incident, the TCMG should make contact with the lead agency's media liaison coordinator to ascertain whether tourism-specific queries are being raised.

- The TCMG will provide the media with authorised factual updates on the situation relating to tourism as quickly as possible.

- If further or specifically requested information is not immediately available, the media should be told why.

- The TCMG must be regularly updated regarding media interest and attitudes, as well as any community feedback via talkback radio.

- Clear and concise messages should be formulated by the TCMG before any media interview or statement.

- All media releases should be disseminated to regional tourism stakeholders as soon as possible after being issued.

Holding Statement

Media deadlines and inevitable demands for a quick response mean it may prove necessary to issue an interim 'holding statement' to AAP, radio stations and other media in the short term.

This ensures that the region does not appear defensive and also allows for an explanation as to why further details are not yet known. It also informs the media who they should contact if seeking information or comment on tourism issues in the region.

This 2–3 paragraph statement should be clear, concise, factual and qualified (eg: 'as far as can be ascertained at this early stage'), and will be drafted by the assigned TCMG Media Officer in consultation with other TCMG members.

Distribution of the statement will be the responsibility of the TCMG Chair, and can be done initially on a verbal basis and then in written form eg: release, website etc.

A copy of the statement should also be issued to all TCMG members, local and regional tourism organisations, relevant tourist operators, local agencies and any necessary third parties.

Media Releases

The content of media releases will vary depending on the type and magnitude of the incident. However, they should include the following elements:

- Be factual – don't speculate

- Provide a contact name and number for further inquiries

- Date and time clearly stated, specifying whether for immediate release

- Detail efforts to resolve the situation

- Be calm, reassuring and positive (avoid terms such as 'crisis' and 'emergency')

- Acknowledge responsibility to visitors and community

- Indicate that further information will be released as it becomes available

- Acknowledge importance of visitor welfare etc (if appropriate)

- Indicate that key stakeholders will be briefed (if appropriate)

- Contain quotes from the TCMG Chair

- If appropriate, empathise with any victims etc of the incident.

Table 7: Media Interview Guidelines

1. Speak concisely and in short sentences.
2. Formulate a handful of central key messages - write them down and stick to them.
3. Remember who your real audience is – viewers, listeners, readers.
4. Be aware of latest information.
5. Be aware of how the crisis or incident is being reported and of any specific concerns raised.
6. Don't do media interviews off-the-cuff – think first and have a clear objective.
7. If appropriate, ask whether the journalist has spoken to anyone else.
8. Anticipate potential questions and prepare thoroughly.
9. Don't be defensive.
10. Know the facts – never attempt to bluff.
11. Never lie – you will be found out.
12. Don't repeat provocative phrases eg: "No, we're not embarrassed by this situation …"
13. Avoid debates.
14. Be mindful of media deadlines.
15. Never assume the cameras or tape recorders are off.
16. Make written background information available if appropriate.
17. Use everyday language – not technical jargon.
18. Minimise surrounding distractions.
19. Dress appropriately.
20. Ensure an appropriate backdrop for television interviews.

Download a proforma media release from **tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis**

Select protocols and other actions for communicating with the media that will be useful for the TCMG and incorporate into your Communications Program

Communications with the tourism industry

In the event of a crisis or major incident, members of the local tourism industry and travel trade partners will be understandably concerned about the potential impact it will have on their visitors and their livelihoods. They will expect a communications response that is practical and realistic but also measured.

The TCMG is, of course, not responsible for managing the emergency response at the time of a crisis. It is important to clearly communicate to the industry what the group is not responsible for and to direct stakeholders to appropriate agencies. Managing expectations will help the TCMG to perform its core functions efficiently.

From the guidelines below, identify communications activities that will be useful in the event of a crisis and include them in your communications program.

- If evacuation from an area proves necessary then procedures must be put in place to ensure the cancellation or postponement of inbound tourism to that specific area (and surrounding areas if necessary). Identify how you will do this.

- It is important to ensure that information being released to the media is consistent with that being disseminated among those in the industry. All TCMG media statements should be immediately distributed to tourism industry stakeholders. This is essential to avoid misunderstandings and damaging speculation, and to assist tourism operators in their crisis response.

- It should be explained to tourism businesses via industry briefings and communiqués why certain things might be done or said, and encourage them to appreciate the benefits of having a sole regional spokesman on tourism and the need for protocols in working with the media and using social media.

- To prevent cancellations tourism businesses should also be encouraged in the initial response phase and beyond to communicate with existing bookings. (See also Preparing Tourism Businesses section).

- During a crisis, regional tourism operators and accommodation providers are well placed to provide feedback to the TCMG regarding the nature and extent of the incident, as well as its current and likely impact on their businesses and visitor activity. (See Impact Assessment section).

- In return, the TCMG should provide advice and possibly short-term assistance as a matter of urgency to those affected (both directly and indirectly).

- After the initial impact of the crisis, communicate opportunities to access government and charitable funds and services to assist with the recovery process

- Keep your travel trade partners fully informed about the crisis event and recovery initiatives so they can make alternative arrangements for inbound tourism, and limit misinformation. Include the domestic and international retail and wholesale travel industry.

Communications with key stakeholders

- Keep stakeholders such as Tourism Victoria and the Victorian Tourism Industry Council well informed of the impact of the crisis on the tourism industry, as well as response and recovery activities. This will assist the state government to develop appropriate responses to assist the region. If the event is nationally significant, also keep Tourism Australia informed, although information will also be provided by Tourism Victoria.

- Participate in government planning to restore key tourism infrastructure and attractions

Communications with neighbouring regions

Your region may not be the only area impacted by a crisis. Neighbouring regions can also be directly or indirectly affected by the same event. It is essential that communication with the media and with visitors is coordinated and consistent between regions.

Your communications program should identify:

- Who on the TCMG is responsible for communicating with neighbouring regions affected by the same crisis;

- With whom communications should take place in neighbouring regions (including contact details).

Arrangements should be established between neighbouring regions in advance of a crisis to prepare communications strategies that will facilitate a streamlined approach if a crisis occurs.

Communications with visitors

Being clear in advance about how you will communicate with visitors will make the job of navigating a crisis much easier.

In addition to the media providing information to visitors about a crisis event, tourism operators and accommodation providers are perfectly positioned to provide their customers and potential visitors with practical and authoritative information regarding travel plans, safety of routes, alternative activities and so on.

Tourism businesses will need clear and concise information, as well as regular updates, so that visitors, their families and potential visitors can be properly informed about the crisis situation.

Tools you can provide to operators to assist them are email updates, reception/phone/email scripts, Q&A sheets, etc.

The advent of social media means communication times have shortened. Facebook, Twitter and others can provide fast, effective safety information to prospective visitors, and give reassurance to visitors who are unsure about planned visits.

Other avenues to inform visitors about the crisis include:

- Visitor websites (local, regional, state and national)

- Visitor information centres (in the region and adjacent regions)

- Local visitor radio

The TCMG also needs to either revise or suspend any current marketing programs for the region immediately after a crisis until an appropriate recovery strategy has been determined.

> From the information above, select tips that will be useful for the TCMG and incorporate into your Communications Program.

Impact Assessments

Introduction

A crisis will affect everyone in the region differently, bringing with it different needs.

During a crisis, regional tourism operators and accommodation providers are well placed to provide feedback to the TCMG regarding the nature and extent of the incident, as well as its current and likely impact on their businesses and visitor activity.

Initial crisis assessment

Before any communications are issued, it is important to get a handle on what has happened in relation to the crisis, and what is likely to happen next.

Within a few hours of an emergency incident occurring, the TCMG Chair should consider responses to a few key questions to help identify the problem areas created by the incident (in general terms). Topics to consider include:

- Nature of the incident - the type of crisis, effects on visitor operations, potential health or safety issues, potential impacts on the region's desirability as a tourist destination;

- Nature and extent of media coverage;

- Potential economic impacts on the tourism industry;

- Communications - availability of accurate and up-to-date information, and the capacity to update the tourism industry and other stakeholders; availability of communications resources; and

- TCMG status - membership and requirements to meet.

See table 8 for an Initial Crisis Assessment Checklist.

Rapid impact snapshot

Conduct a short Rapid Impact Snapshot to attain feedback on the initial tourism impact of the incident from a representative cross section of tourism businesses in the region (see table 9 for sample questions). Ensure that you involve tourism businesses who are both directly and indirectly affected. NB. The appropriate time to conduct this activity will depend on the nature of the crisis event.

This exercise will help you to assess the nature and degree of impacts on businesses, and to identify their various requirements. It will guide TCMG responses to the event, as well as the response from Tourism Victoria. Additionally, if carried out on a regular basis, it will enable the monitoring of the industry's performance over time.

Detailed Tourism Impact Survey

When detailed analysis of the impact of the incident on the tourism industry is required, such as when preparing Recovery Plan, undertake a Detailed Tourism Impact survey (see table 10). This information will build on the findings of the Rapid Impact Snapshot.

In general, the survey remains open for businesses to complete for one week. NB. The appropriate time to send this survey also depends on the nature of the crisis incident.

> Include actions related to undertaking an Initial Crisis Assessment, Rapid Impact Snapshot and Detailed Tourism Impact survey in your Plan.

Table 8: Initial Crisis Assessment Checklist

1. What is the nature of the crisis?	2. What are the impacts/issues regarding the region's tourism image, operability and earning power?	3. Other TCMG issues

(a) Type of incident and how extensive?
   • eg. bushfire, flood, oil spill, gas leak
(b) What visitor operations are affected?
   • Safety
   • Travel / transport
   • Accommodation
   • Activities
   • Reputation
(c) Is the incident/problem contained or escalating?
(d) Are there any health issues for visitors or tourism operations?
(e) What stakeholders are affected/ potentially affected?
(f) What are the potential short- and long-term impacts on the region's desirability as a tourist destination?
(g) Is it likely significant recovery efforts will be required?
	(a) Is there substantial media coverage?
	   • Local
	   • Statewide
	   • National
	   • International
	   • News
	   • Current Affairs
	(b) What are the likely economic impacts?
	   • Direct business interruption
	   • Indirect disruption to associated businesses
	   • Duration
	   • Potential liability claims
	   • Insurance issues
		(a) Is the TCMG receiving timely and accurate information? Issues to be considered include:
		   • Effective interface with the relevant emergency service agencies
		   • Communication links to the site of crisis
		   • Need for a TCMG observer at the site
		   • Effective interface with other key audiences and stakeholders
		   • Need for additional resources
		   • Need to bring in outside communications expertise
		(b) Are media inquiries being (or able to be) adequately addressed in a timely fashion?
		(c) How frequently will the TCMG need to meet?
		(d) Are there any directly affected stakeholders who should be asked to join the TCMG to address this specific crisis?

Table 9: Rapid Impact Snapshot Sample Questions

Tourism Industry Urgent Information Request
The following information will greatly assist in providing an initial snapshot and enable the on-going monitoring of the impact of the ******on the region's tourism industry. Please complete as soon as possible and email back to ******. All information will be treated as strictly confidential.
Name of business
Location and main contact
Type of business
Have you been unable to trade during this current crisis?
Yes / No
If yes, please explain?
At this point in time, what is impact of the incident on your revenue, as compared to the same time last year?
% down   % up
At this point in time, can you predict the impact of the incident on your revenue for the next three months (as a percentage)?
% down   % up
If relevant, has your business experienced booking cancellations, as a percentage of existing bookings?
%
Have you experienced a decline in forward bookings over the next three months, compared to the same time last year?
Have you been required to lay off staff (as a percentage of total staff numbers)?
%
Thank you for your time & input.

Table 10: Detailed Tourism Impact Assessment Sample Questions

Business Name
Main Contact
Telephone
Email
Type of Business

Answer where applicable for your business

a. What assistance do you need at this stage?

b. What impact has there been to business assets e.g. premises, vehicles?

c. Have you been able to trade during this current crisis?

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain?

d. What is the approximate impact of the incident on a) patron numbers b) revenue, as compared to the same time last year? Please indicate percentage

e. Can you predict the impact of the incident on your future a) patron numbers b) revenue?
Please indicate percentage

f. If relevant, has your business experienced booking cancellations as a direct result of the floods?

- Yes
- No

If yes, for what period were the bookings held?

g. Are you able to estimate the impact of these cancellations as a percentage of existing bookings?
Please indicate percentage.

h. Have you experienced a decline in forward bookings over the next three months, compared to the same time last year? If yes, please indicate percentage.

i. Are you able to estimate the impact of these cancellations as a percentage of existing bookings?
Please indicate percentage.

j. Have you experienced a decline in forward bookings over the next three months, compared to the same time last year? If yes, please indicate percentage.

k. Have you or are you likely to lay off staff as a direct result of the incident?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many full time equivalent staff will be affected?

l. Have other infrastructure or services been affected that impact on your business?

m. Other Comments

Recovery Marketing Strategies
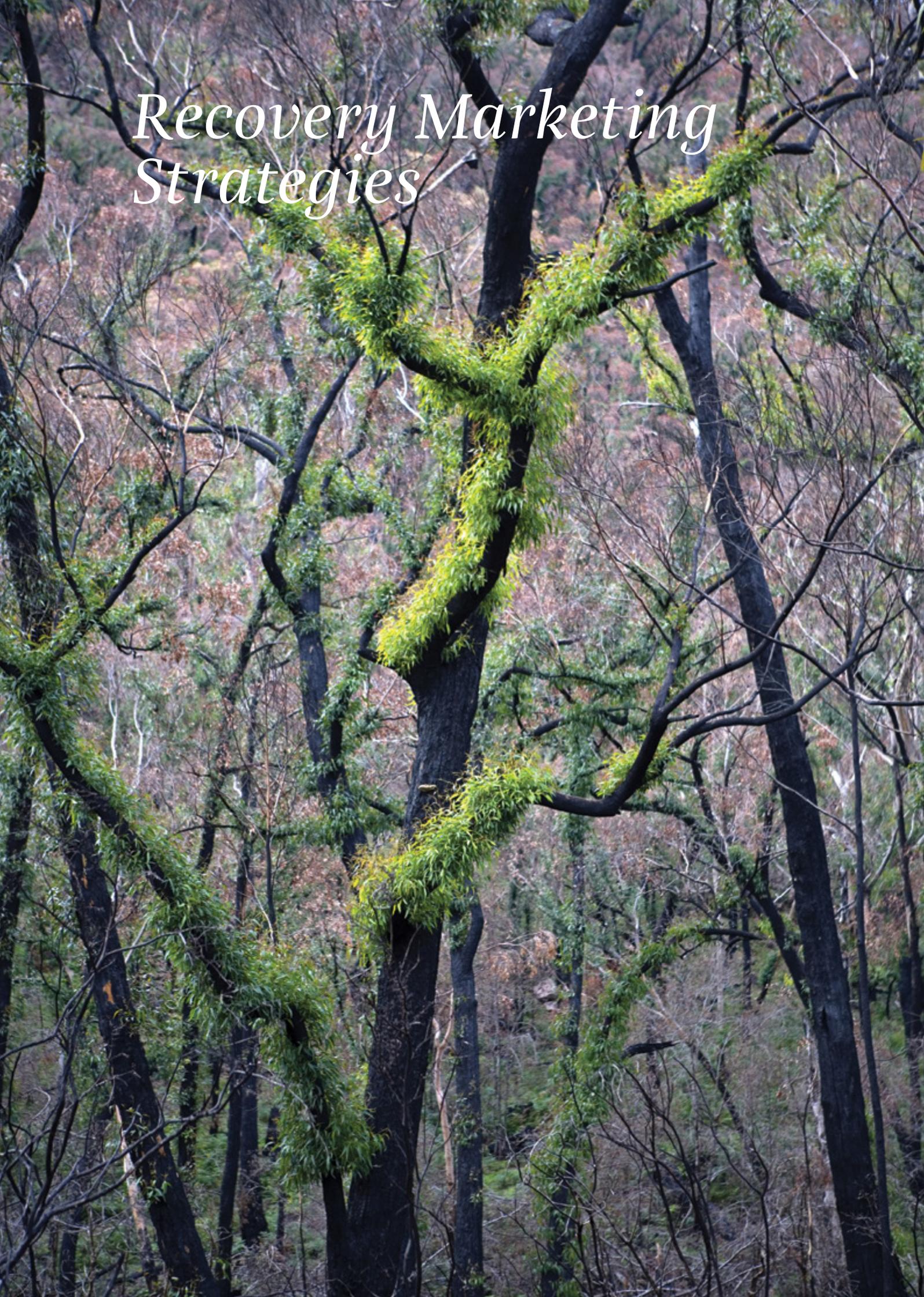
Introduction

It is essential that the region delivers marketing messages as quickly and effectively as possible when a region or area re-opens for business (the recovery phase) in order to regain consumer confidence and counter any negative or inaccurate perceptions of the region.

To aid the efficient rollout of this process, include some potential marketing strategies in your Plan which relate to your key crisis risks.

Re-opening a region

A region is considered to be open for business and in the 'recovery' phase when:

- A range of visitor services and products are operating again
- Vital infrastructure is restored, including access routes and transport services if they are critical for visitation
- It is safe and enjoyable to visit.

Not all businesses must be operating for a region to be considered open for trade but it's important that there's a choice of facilities and services such as accommodation, dining, attractions, etc.

The recovery phase should be accompanied by a marketing campaign to bring visitors back to the region.

It's important to note that the TCMG will often be under pressure to promote a region and encourage visitation before it's really ready. However, be sure the visitor experience is satisfactory before re-opening.

Can a region be partly open?

Sometimes a whole region may suffer a loss of trade even though parts of the region are directly affected by a crisis and the remainder is not.

In this case, it may be appropriate to promote parts of the region that are physically unaffected by a crisis, being clear in marketing communications which areas, roads, attractions, etc. are operating.

Recovery period

The factors which will affect the speed of a region's recovery are:

- The level of preparedness of the tourism industry
- The nature of the crisis and its impact on perceptions of safety
- Whether the crisis involved any loss of life
- The extent of damage caused to vital infrastructure
- The efficiency with which facilities are brought back on line and services resumed
- The success of media management strategies
- The effectiveness of marketing to promote the region's status

People and businesses will require variable lengths of time to recover after a crisis. In both cases it is usually a long process. Visitors returning to an affected area can help with the psychological, as well as economic, recovery of local communities.

Review the region's products / offers

After a crisis, a region's key products or drawcards may have changed (usually temporarily). You may need to refocus your product offerings in some way (ie. what you promote) to compensate for this.

- Where nature is typically a dominant offer and the physical environment is affected, e.g. by fire, flood or cyclone, new 'attractors' will need to be found.

- Major tourist attractions may be closed or damaged so new sites of interest that are appealing and safe for visitors will need to be identified.

- The product offer may need to be changed in some way to meet the requirements of new target markets (see below).

Given the key crisis risks to your region identified in your risk assessment, consider which products are likely to be most affected, and list potential replacement products for promotion in your Plan.

Review target markets

Different markets will bounce back after a crisis at different speeds depending on the type of event and visitors' travel motivations. For example, German visitors generally have a strong interest in nature and may take longer to return to a region where natural habitat has been damaged. Visitors from the USA are more concerned about personal safety than other markets and can avoid a region for a long time if there has been a terrorist attack.

If some of your region's traditional markets are reluctant to visit, revise your target markets. For example:

- You may be able to attract new markets with different interests (e.g. if short-break weekenders are staying away from a bushfire-affected region, focus on attracting a coach market who will visit a range of indoor and outdoor attractions.)

- Encourage previous visitors to return.

- Focus on market segments less deterred by the specific type of crisis (e.g. if visitation by international markets is in decline due to a global financial crisis, shift the focus to relevant domestic markets). Business tourists are also likely to return faster to a region after a crisis due to the necessity of work.

Given the key crisis risks that could affect your region, outline in your Plan which markets are likely to stay away, and which markets could potentially replace them in the short term.

Recovery marketing activities

When selecting recovery marketing activities, there are a number of options to consider depending on the budget available and the audiences to be targeted (as shown in table 11).

Consider engaging professional public relations services to help you relaunch your region. There will be a complex array of perceptions / misperceptions amongst the public which need to be addressed correctly to restore visitation. Expert advice can greatly assist.

Involve key stakeholders, such as tourism operators, Tourism Victoria and the travel trade, in the selection of marketing recovery activities as they will be able to contribute useful ideas and solutions. This could be in the form of a questionnaire or workshops/meetings.

You need to consider a number of factors when timing your relaunch. If you go too early it could do more harm than good. People might think it inconsiderate or worse if you go back to market at the wrong time.

Sometimes parts of a region are not damaged by a crisis but people stay away thinking the whole are is affected. At such times, marketing can be required to restore visitation to parts of the region while other parts remain closed for trade.

Identify relevant generic marketing strategies for recovery to include in your Plan. When a crisis occurs, update these strategies to reflect the context of the event.

Planning the restoration

In the recovery phase after a crisis, your tourism organisation should be involved in discussions about restoring key visitor infrastructure, amenities and public attractions so the relevant agencies understand the tourism industry's priorities.

Participation will also keep you informed of progress on restoration works which can help guide recovery marketing and communications activities.

A region may still be open for business while this recovery process is underway.

Funding recovery marketing

Depending on the magnitude of the crisis and its impact on the tourism industry, the Victorian Government may contribute some funds to assist with the recovery process. However, this is not always the case and your tourism organisation should be prepared to fund its own recovery program.

Table 11: Recovery Marketing Activity Options

Media	Advertising/Marketing
Low Cost • Provide regular media updates • Promote newsworthy stories • Distribute fact sheets • Highlight recovery milestones • Encourage high profile visitors (e.g. Premier, celebrities) • Highlight impact of crisis on local businesses, etc	**Low Cost** • Targeted advertising in tourism publications • Social media, including relevant blogs • Direct communication with inbound travel operators • Freecall Information Line • Existing outlets (e.g. visitor information centres, visitor radio, etc)
Medium Cost • As above • Conduct journalist familiarisations to the region • Pursue positive stories with expert PR assistance • Conduct briefings / familiarisations for opinion leaders (e.g. radio hosts)	**Medium Cost** • As above • Market research • More extensive print, web and radio advertising in mainstream media • Opportunities for advertorials • Co-ordinated special travel and accommodation deals
High Cost • As above • Arrange more extensive familiarisations to the region	**High Cost** • As above • Extensive print, web and broadcast advertising, including TV • Newspaper supplements / advertorials • Direct marketing to key audiences • Introduction and promotion of generous travel and accommodation deals

Given the key crisis risks that could affect your region:

- Identify which products are likely to be most affected, and identify potential replacements (product types) for promotions.
- Identify target markets most likely to return after a crisis, and who suit the products that would be available.
- Identify marketing activities that will stimulate visitation by target markets.
- Identify how your tourism organisation will be involved in the redevelopment of affected visitor experiences.

Preparing Tourism Businesses

Introduction

Assisting the tourism industry to prepare their businesses for a crisis and to understand regional tourism crisis arrangements prior to a crisis occurring can substantially improve the effectiveness of the region's crisis response and recovery.

This section contains recommendations for industry training and skill development, and the recognition of operators who are well-prepared in crisis management.

Awareness of regional arrangements and skill development

Include relevant actions in your Plan from the recommendations below:

- Communicate TCMG media protocols to tourism businesses. In particular, encourage businesses to refer all media inquiries to the TCMG or to respond to the media in consultation with the TCMG.

- Explain TCMG roles, functions and proposed regional crisis management arrangements outlined in your Plan. Resolve any disagreements about contentious elements of the Plan.

- Provide skill development opportunities for tourism operators so they can manage their business to prepare, respond and recover from a crisis event. Activities include:
  - Workshops or mentoring
  - Tips on your industry website
  - Articles and case studies in newsletters

- Encourage operators to consult "Open for Business: a comprehensive guide to crisis management for tourism businesses", a companion publication to this guidebook produced by Tourism Victoria (see tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis).

Understanding the legal obligations for cancellations in a crisis

Tourism businesses should be encouraged to have a cancellation policy and be familiar with their legal obligations when managing bookings after a crisis.

During a crisis, tourism businesses may be required to close or their business could be inaccessible due to road closures. In such cases, businesses are legally obliged to refund deposits for bookings that fall during that time.

However, sometimes even when businesses and access routes are open, customers will want to cancel due to a perception that the region is less attractive or unsafe to visit after a crisis.

A tourism business should have a cancellation policy in place prior to a crisis occurring which is communicated to customers at the time of booking. It should clearly state the refund terms for a deposit. Operators should also be aware of methods to manage bookings to the satisfaction of visitors, such as encouraging customers to defer a booking rather receive a refund, or agreeing to refund a deposit for a cancellation even though they are not legally obliged to.

Good management of cancellations can help maintain customer loyalty and generate a positive reputation for the region.

See Open for Business: a comprehensive guide to crisis management for tourism businesses for further information.

Encouraging excellence in crisis management

Consider rewarding those who have incorporated crisis management into their business, such as through a regional awards program. Businesses who are well organised and recover relatively quickly after a crisis are great assets to the region.

Tourism Victoria Resources

Tourism Victoria has developed a suite of resources to enable tourism businesses to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis events, including:

Crisis Essentials Guide & Open for Business On-line Resource

The Crisis Essentials publication aims to provide tourism businesses with essential information to enable them to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis events, such as bushfires, drought and floods.

The publication supports the more comprehensive Open for Business crisis management on-line resource (tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis). This on-line resource provides a comprehensive suite of tools, resources and advice as well as case studies of tourism businesses impacted by recent crisis events.

Copies of Crisis Essentials are available from Tourism Victoria (tel: 9653 9777) or your Regional Tourism Board.

Crisis Management Workshops/Briefings

Subject to funding, Tourism Victoria can conduct crisis management workshops/briefings for tourism businesses, based on the content of the Open for Business publication. A training curriculum has been developed and available to regional tourism managers to guide the delivery of these workshops by trained professionals.

Open for Business Tourism Bushfire Documentaries

Tourism Victoria has produced short documentaries on 3 tourism businesses that have successfully responded and recovered from bushfire related crisis events. The documentaries serve as an introduction to the crisis management workshops and available in both DVD and on-line formats.

Crisis Specific Briefings

On a needs basis, Tourism Victoria, in partnership with the responsible Government agency, conducts briefing sessions for tourism businesses on impending or potential crisis events, both in Melbourne or in the relevant regions.

Crisis Essentials

CRISIS MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Identify activities to cover the following:

- Educate tourism businesses in crisis preparation, response and recovery activities.

- Provide information to operators about TCMG roles, group members and proposed crisis management arrangements.

- Provide information about preparing a cancellation policy, and the legal obligations for refunds associated with emergency events.

- Recognise operators who are well-prepared for a crisis.

Document these activities in your Plan, including who will do what and when

Checklists

PRE-RESPONSE (READINESS) CHECKLIST

If the TCMG receives advanced notice from emergency service agencies and/or Tourism Victoria that an incident is going to occur that will affect the region, such as a severe weather forecast, an algal bloom moving down a river, or an approaching bushfire, some suggested steps include:

1. Conduct a brief assessment of the threat.

2. Discuss relevant warnings with Tourism Victoria to gather additional information.

3. Communicate all relevant warnings to your regional tourism industry.

4. Identify with Tourism Victoria if travel advisories are required to discourage travel to the affected area, and issue as relevant with Tourism Victoria.

5. Encourage tourism operators (including event organisers) to assess the potential impacts on their business and the safety of staff and visitors, and manage their bookings accordingly.

6. Support the relocation / deferment of major events as required.

Undertake relevant marketing activities such as promoting parts of the region and activities that will not be affected by the incident. This may include providing fact sheets to visitor information centres and tourism operators to convey information to visitors.

Please note that advanced notice is not always available for a crisis event.

RESPONSE CHECKLIST

When your tourism organisation / TCMG has been notified that a crisis event has occurred, your response activities should commence. After you have confirmed the safety of your staff and premises (if relevant), undertake the following.

Immediate Actions: First 24 hours

1-2 Hours After the Incident

Assess the situation

- Establish and maintain contact with the relevant emergency services agency/s for regular information updates.

- TCMG Chair to conduct an initial assessment of the probable scale and impact of the crisis (see Initial Crisis Assessment Checklist).

- Contact Tourism Victoria to discuss the incident.

Liaise with Tourism Victoria

- With Tourism Victoria, determine if the event is of local, regional, state or national significance. This will guide their level of involvement in the response and recovery process.

Activate Crisis Management Plan

- Refer to the Scenario Planning Table in your Tourism Crisis Management Plan (as discussed in Risk Assessment and Management section) and determine what responses are applicable.

- Commence the update of the Plan with specifics relevant to the crisis.

- Communicate with other senior stakeholders (e.g. participating councils) as required.

- Refer all initial media queries and requests back to the emergency service (control) agency dealing with the crisis or incident unless there is a specific tourism focus.

- Prepare a holding statement, talking points / Q&As and send to media outlets.

- Brief your staff.

Activate the Tourism Crisis Management Group

- Contact TCMG members and arrange to meet within the next few hours.

2-6 Hours After the Incident

Manage communications

- Conduct a TCMG meeting. Provide a verbal / written update on the situation. Report on communications to date. Confirm plans for communications and other crisis management response activities.

- Communicate outcomes of the TCMG meeting with Tourism Victoria.

- Set up media monitoring of local, state and national media (as feasible), including social media, to gauge the impact of the event on public perceptions.

- Liaise with emergency service agency/s.

- Liaise with senior stakeholders.

- Work with the media.

Communicate with tourism operators

- Send all holding statements, media releases to tourism operators.

Communicate with current/potential visitors

- Provide links to relevant emergency service websites on tourism consumer websites to update visitors and friends/relatives.

6-24 Hours After the Incident

Manage communications

- Keep tourism industry informed.

- Update holding statement.

- Liaise with stakeholders.

- Update consumer and industry websites.

- Revise, cancel or suspend tourism advertising in market.

Short-Medium Term Actions: days 2-14

The period of 'short to medium term' response to a crisis event can vary for a tourism region depending on the impact of the event. Typically it can be up to 14 days. However, it can be longer if a number of businesses have been directly affected and require a significant level of work to reopen.

It can also be longer if other major infrastructure or natural assets in the region / local area continue to be affected, e.g. roads blocked, rivers heavily flood. The steps below will be relevant for as long as the region / local area is closed for trade.

Assess the crisis

- Conduct a short Rapid Impact Snapshot to attain feedback on the initial tourism impact of the incident from a representative cross section of tourism businesses in the region. Ensure that you involve tourism businesses who are both directly and indirectly affected (see Impact Assessment section).

Reconvene the TCMG

- TCMG should meet as regularly as required to guide the tourism industry's response activities.

Update crisis communications program

- Continue to update the Communications Program in your Tourism Crisis Management Plan to reflect the specifics of the event. Update all relevant stakeholders and audiences giving consideration to those listed in the Crisis Communications section.

- Identify how, who and when these stakeholders will be briefed / consulted, including:

  - Key messages to be released to each (to be updated as crisis event unfolds)

  - Marketing strategies (as part of the recovery process)

Work with the media

- As part of implementing the Communications Program, work closely with the media to manage consumer perceptions.

Keep tourism operators and visitors informed

- As part of implementing the Communications Program, communicate regularly with tourism operators and visitors.

Give consideration to the needs of directly and indirectly affected operators. If areas are completely physically unaffected by the crisis and safe for travel but visitors are staying away, consider conducting recovery marketing activities for parts of the region.

Long-Term Actions: day 15 and beyond

Deactivate the Tourism Crisis Management Group

- While the timing will vary depending on the nature of the crisis, the responsibility for long term strategic recovery activities should transfer to the relevant regional tourism board at the completion of the TCMG's tactical recovery activities.

Product redevelopment

- Your tourism organisation should also participate in planning by relevant agencies to restore key visitor infrastructure and public attractions.

Consider the checklist above and adapt it to suit the needs of your region. Identify who will conduct each activity, and include them in your plan.

RECOVERY CHECKLIST

Steps to Recovery

1 Take stock

- Confirm that your region is ready to re-open using the criteria identified in the Recovery Marketing Strategies section.

- Undertake a Detailed Tourism Impact Survey to monitor the continuing impact of the crisis on the tourism industry.

- Prepare an up-to-date position paper that details emergency authorities' activities and the status of the region's tourism industry.

- Update any website information with a "concluding statement" about recovery from the crisis and remove outdated media releases.

2 Maintain communication with stakeholders

- Update and implement the Communications Program in your Plan to inform tourism operators, government and other stakeholders about the recovery process and keep up-to-date with information from emergency services.

- Communicate opportunities to tourism operators to access government and charitable funds and services.

3 Government Liaison

- Continue to liaise with the government to determine a suitable recovery package (which may or may not include funding to your tourism organisation).

4 Monitor public perceptions

- Continue to monitor public perceptions and media coverage of the region.

- Support the media to write post-crisis feature stories.

5 Consumer marketing

- Update the recovery marketing activities identified in your Plan to relaunch the region to all key visitor markets.

6 Product redevelopment

- Continue to participate in planning to restore key visitor infrastructure and public attractions.

> Consider the checklist above and adapt it to suit the needs of your region. Identify who will conduct each activity, and include them in your plan.

Reviewing & Testing Your Plan

Introduction

Remember to evaluate, test and update your Plan so it can remain relevant and improve over time.

A crisis management plan should be a living document, undergoing constant evaluation and updates.

After a crisis event, an evaluation of pre-response, response and recovery processes can provide insightful information that can be used to update the Tourism Crisis Management Plan.

Evaluation questions should include (amongst others):

- How well were the response and recovery processes executed by the TCMG?

- What did and didn't work?

- How effectively were communications co-ordinated between partners?

- How well equipped was the tourism industry to manage their businesses through the crisis?

Only after a crisis management plan has been put to the test can you truly evaluate its effectiveness.

If your region has been lucky enough not to have a crisis situation in which to test its plan, it should be regularly tested to establish how well it's likely to perform in the event of an emergency, which is arguably the most vital component of your region's crisis management process.

Desktop exercise

Although by their nature crises are hard to simulate in a rehearsal, you can assess your plan against a number of possible scenarios in a paper-based/desktop exercise.

A desktop exercise should be conducted at least annually to assess the level of preparedness of the TCMG, test the effectiveness of the Plan or to specifically test a component such as crisis media management.

Scenarios are developed based on past and potential crisis events that impact on the region's tourism industry (see Risk Assessment & Management section). The TCMG then responds to a crisis scenario as if it were a real crisis event.

A review is held at the conclusion of each desktop crisis exercise to assess the group's responses and to determine the level of TCMG's preparedness. Where required, the Plan is modified to address deficiencies from these exercises.

> Include an action to evaluate, test and update your Plan, and allocate responsibility and a timeframe.

Case Studies

MURRAY RIVER BLUE-GREEN ALGAE BLOOM: MILDURA TOURISM

In early 2010, a bloom of blue green algae (BGA) appeared in the Murray River and began travelling towards the Mildura region. Mildura Tourism was notified and they began preparations for dealing with a significant outbreak. On 23rd February, a red alert was placed on the Murray River at the Barnham region, although it would take another month for the bloom to reach Mildura – just in time for the Easter school holiday and peak houseboating periods.

What was the impact on the region?

The crisis occurred just before and during the Mildura region's busiest tourist time. It also coincided with the region's largest river based event, the Mildura 100 Ski Race held over the Easter weekend.

Mildura Tourism recognised that the bloom presented potential safety impacts for water-based and riverside activities. In preparation, they advised Mildura 100 Ski Race organisers, along with the houseboat, caravan and camping market sectors, about the outbreak and its potential impacts, such as health risks from exposure to the bloom.

What steps were taken to address the impacts?

Action plan

Mildura Tourism's first step to address the issue was to work closely with the Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (SRACC) and Tourism Victoria to negate any misunderstandings and perceptions that the entire river was 'unhealthy'. Ensuring consistent and accurate information was paramount.

The Crisis Management Plan and BGA Action Plan were both revised in January 2010 in preparation for any BGA outbreaks over late summer when it usually can occur. The BGA communications database was updated by Mildura Tourism to ensure all relevant stakeholders could be contacted with important health, safety and risk information on a needs basis.

Different messages were relevant to different segments of the tourism industry along the Murray, and it was essential to clarify these different messages for the media, visitors and the tourism industry.

The movement of the BGA along the Murray towards Mildura was monitored since the red alert in February at Barham and Mildura Tourism activated its Tourism Response and Recovery Group in preparation of the arrival of the bloom in the Mildura weir pool.

Working together

In an effort to be upfront, honest, consistent and clear to the consumer, numerous industry stakeholders were consulted and communicated with throughout the period, including SRACC, Tourism Victoria, Mildura Rural City Council, Wentworth Shire Council, River Activity User group, Parks Victoria, Mallee Catchment Authority and NSW Maritime Authority.

Communications – messages to industry

Clear and accurate information via regular e-bulletins was sent out to the industry to ensure stakeholders were conveying the correct messages to visitors. They were provided with a BGA Fact Sheet which was developed to ensure all safety information was communicated to visitors prior to arrival in the region.

Six e-bulletins and four fact sheets were distributed to industry. Industry was also kept up to date via representatives of the Tourism Response and Recovery Group.

The houseboat sector was able to respond to the information and move their houseboats to sections of the river where the bloom was minimal, ensuring they could honour their bookings and maintain their business.

Communications – messages to media and visitors

Key messages were developed for the media throughout the outbreak with one key spokesperson, Mildura Tourism Chief Executive Officer, Rod Trowbridge, appointed to discuss the BGA outbreak with the media. This ensured consistency in the information provided.

Media were also included in the distribution of e-bulletins to ensure key messages were reflected in editorial to limit misunderstandings or confusion.

E-bulletins and BGA Fact Sheets were also used to inform and reassure current and future visitors to the region. They were distributed via visitor information centres and uploaded to the Mildura Tourism website, social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), and Tourism Victoria's visitvictoria.com - ensuring that the key messages were accessible to everyone.

Communications to industry and the media also highlighted the non river-based activities in the region for visitors.

What were the results?

According to Mr Trowbridge, "The anecdotal feedback from industry indicated they were not impacted significantly by the bloom but it did cause uncertainty amongst river users. The overall result was that the crisis was managed well with only minimal impacts occurring pre, during and post-outbreak."

"After the outbreak, we were also given the opportunity to re-affirm our brand and introduce more river visuals into our advertising campaigns that showed a thriving river system and again highlighted our water-based activity draw cards."

Advice for Tourism Organisations

• Have a Crisis Communications Strategy that includes action plans that can be adapted for different crisis events, and an up to date database of industry stakeholders for communication activities.

• Have a Tourism Crisis Management Group organised that can be activated as soon as a crisis occurs.

• Ensure you have templates developed such as e-bulletins, fact sheets, media releases that can be quickly updated / adapted in the event of a crisis.

• Have 5 or 6 'key messages' to respond to media and public enquiries , note these need to be continually updated pre, during and post the crisis event.

BLUE GREEN ALGAE FACT SHEET no.1 & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

milduratourism

26 March 2010

What is the current situation?
Routine monitoring by the New South Wales Office of Water and Victorian agencies has detected high numbers of potentially toxic blue-green algae in the Murray River at Colignan through to Mildura.

A red alert warning has been issued for blue-green algae for the Murray River in this zone.

The Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee (SRACC) is sampling sites along the Murray River daily to monitor the current bloom. Current information on the status of the bloom can be obtained from the Regional Algal Coordinating Committee Algal Information Hotline on 1800 999 457 or visit http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Water-Management/Water-quality/Algal-information/default.aspx

What is being done?
• The Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee is continuing to monitor the water.
• Warning signs have been erected at key sites to advise the public not to come into contact with affected water. Given the extent of the bloom, not all affected locations in the zone can be signposted; and water users are advised to have contact with water in the affected zone.
• Town water supply authorities are treating town water supplies with powdered activated carbon for Victorian consumers in Red Cliffs; Mildura supplies will be treated if required however, raw water drawn from these areas should be avoided for all purposes.
• Mildura Tourism has activated the Tourism Response and Recovery Group and will work inconjunction with the Sunraysia Regional Algal Coordinating Committee to provide regular updates to stakeholders and visitors.

What is Blue Green Algae?
Blue Green Algae are microscopic cells that grow naturally in Australian fresh and saline waters. They are a type of bacteria, but act more like plants.
Blue Green Algae grows in dams, rivers creeks reservoirs lakes and even hot springs.

Why is Blue Green Algae a problem?
When they are present in high numbers, they spoil the water quality by producing toxins, odours or thick scums. The toxins that they produce may cause skin irritations, nausea or gastroenteritis if swallowed by humans and maybe deadly to livestock and pets.

How do I know if the water contains Blue Green Algae?
If the water has a musty or septic odour, has an unpleasant taste or has a surface scum that appears green or blue green you should not use the water and contact the local water authority. A blue green algae scum will look like paint floating on oil.

What conditions will prevent an outbreak?
Rain, cool weather and windy conditions act to break up the algae bloom and contribute to water flow hence dissipating the problem. A combination of rain, cold or wind factors prevents Blue Green Algae.

WILSONS PROMONTORY FLOOD: DESTINATION GIPPSLAND

Introduction

In March 2011, Wilsons Promontory National Park received 370mm of rain in a 24 hour period – a third of their average yearly rainfall. It resulted in severe flash flooding which caused significant damage to the Tidal River General Store, cabins, offices and other essential services equipment that supports power, fresh water and the campground sewerage system. Part of a bridge on a major access road was washed away limiting access to the park, with many of the park's more remote sites also made inaccessible.

What was the impact on the region?

With limited access to the Park, visitors stayed away from the South Gippsland area creating a significant impact on local businesses. A local survey revealed that 200 businesses were affected by the flood, including retailers and commercial services. It demonstrated the importance of tourism to the whole economy of the area.

What steps were taken to address the impacts?

Working together

A Tourism Crisis Management Group was formed once it was determined that this was a crisis of regional significance. It consisted of representatives from Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria, South Gippsland Shire Council, Prom Country Regional Tourism, a local tourism association and chaired by Destination Gippsland.

Terry Robinson, Chief Executive Officer of Destination Gippsland, stated that, "The key role of the TCMG was to feed accurate and up to date information to the media and to the tourism industry."

"Of most importance was to restore road access, and thus tourist visitation, to the Prom as much as possible by Easter."

The TCMG worked with the State Government to bring the Premier to the region. His visit resulted in a commitment to restore the road to Wilsons Promontory by Easter.

Destination Gippsland also had in place a basic crisis management plan, which could be tailored to enable a quick and effective response to the flooding crisis.

Communications – messages to industry

Key information was disseminated to tourism operators via emails and briefings about road openings and general region updates from Parks Victoria to keep industry informed about the current status of the recovery process. This information could then be passed on to visitors.

Communications – messages to media and visitors

Destination Gippsland contributed $40,000 to help roll out a recovery marketing campaign to communicate information about sections of Wilson Promontory that were opened, and to promote other attractions tourists could visit in the South Gippsland region.

The PR campaign was used to counteract unfounded concerns about visiting the region and successfully communicated a 'partial opening' message in time for Easter to encourage patronage over the holidays. The messages were reinforced via Tourism Victoria's visitvictoria.com.au website, Destination Gippsland website, social media platforms, tourism operators' online platforms, briefings to visitor information centres, and a memo of key messages distributed to local and regional tourism organisations.

After six months, on 23 September, Tidal River village was reopened to the public. The State Government made a commitment of $125,000 to Destination Gippsland through the Tourism Flood Recovery Program to conduct a significant marketing and public relations program to restore visitation to the region.

Advice for Tourism Organisations

• Have a basic crisis management plan in place that is agreed upon by key stakeholders. Then tailor it to the circumstances of the particular crisis.

• Make sure you have the financial and personnel resources to draw from at short notice for activities such as administration, project management, communications, and potential marketing activities. Put aside some funds that can be accessed in the event of a crisis, or have a board agreement in place that funds can be redirected to certain activities at short notice. Recovery funds from State Government are not guaranteed, and if they are made available, can take many months to be allocated.

• Have relationships with emergency services and natural resource management agencies already in place prior to a crisis occurring. This is very important in order to be included in the decision making process in response to the crisis. This helps to ensure that the needs of the tourism industry are considered at the earliest possible time in response to a crisis event.

• Make sure your communications are prompt, widespread and address any misperceptions held by the general public. Communications strategies have to reach as many people as quickly as possible for the greatest control over the messages that are disseminated, either through the media, word of mouth, etc. According to Mr. Robinson, "Every day that passes without correcting a false message circulated by the media or perceptions held by the public can harm the tourism industry."

You'll love every piece of Victoria