

CRISIS COMMS STRATEGY

This National Tourism Crisis Communication Plan aims to ensure public and private stakeholders have a clear strategy to respond proactively and swiftly, managing and mitigating a crisis' impact on tourism in SA.



PURPOSE OF THE **CRISIS COMMS STRATEGY**

- Protect the tourism sector from crises
- Manage and mitigate crisis impacts
- Establish an aligned strategy for public and private stakeholders



TYPES OF CRISES COVERED



HIGH RISK

Occurs once every year or more frequently and includes issues like tourist crime, accidents, floods, financial crises, social unrest, changes in visa regulations, etc.



MEDIUM RISK

Occurs once every five years and includes issues such as political instability and epidemics



LOW RISK

Occurs once every 10 years and includes issues like terrorism, earthquakes, pandemics and hurricanes or cyclones.

CRISIS COMMS PHASES

PREPAREDNESS

- Organisation and linkages
- Risk analysis and response scenarios
- Training

RESPONSE

- Situation Analysis
- Response Development
- Communications delivery



RECOVERY

- Industry support
- Effectiveness review
- Recovery activities

PHASE 1

PREPAREDNESS

- Establish / Distributing online crisis management resource.
- Send crisis planning advice to public and private stakeholders.
- Host crisis management and communication briefings.
- Educate visitors about relevant safety risks.
- Build crisis response and recovery capacity among public and private stakeholders, focused on high-risk incidents.



PHASE 2

RESPONSE

- Focal points and chair consult to evaluate scope of crisis and action required.
- If high impact, task team activated.
- In localised impact, local agency and industry with support of task team if required.
- Rapid impact assessment conducted.
- Use crisis comms plan templates, media protocols and prepared messaging.



PHASE 3

RECOVERY

- Communications support for industry stakeholders via sector industry associations and LTAs.
- Review the crisis comms plan to assess if it's fit for purpose – what worked and didn't work.
- Deliver marketing messages quickly and effectively to regain consumer confidence once media hype has died down.



TASK TEAM STRUCTURE

Task team members will be appointed for their experience in crisis communications, management, media relations and social media, and influence within the tourism sector.

The task team chair may appoint other relevant personnel as needed for a particular crisis. As a result, 1-2 positions will remain vacant and be filled depending on the crisis nature and required expertise.



LEVEL OF RESPONSE



LOW IMPACT

Incident impact is local
Limited safety risk for
locals and visitors
Little or no local media
coverage



MEDIUM IMPACT

Incident impact is
regional
High risk for locals and
visitors; potentially
fatalities
Significant regional
media coverage, no
global coverage



HIGH IMPACT

Incident impact is
national
High risk for locals and
visitors; fatalities
Significant regional and
global coverage

WHO DOES WHAT

High Impact: Primary agencies – SA Tourism and TBCSA along with task team chair, activate task team.
Task team executes the crisis communications plan. **For Festive Season, comms task team will drive this.**

Medium and low impact: Primary agencies are replicated at a localised level, e.g. MPTA & Kruger Lowveld & SATSA along with a local task team which has received the same training as national task team.

For Festive Season, comms task team will drive this.

National task team may provide support if requested.

THE TASK TEAM

- Be involved in the plan's development and ongoing maintenance.
- Implement the communications plan.
- Monitor and respond to tourism industry's needs.
- Deliver a communications strategy and associated collateral that positively manages public perceptions of the region with visitor markets and the media being specific targets.
- Handle media enquiries in a timely manner and coordinate a response amongst stakeholders.
- Practice the plan to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.
- Identify who and liaise with the stakeholders that will need to be involved / consulted with.
- Identify potential risks, mitigation strategies and contingencies as ongoing inputs to the plan.
- Coordinate and facilitate tourism business crisis preparedness activities.
- Liaise with incident management team and local tourism stakeholders.
- Define key message development and media relations.

SPOKESPERSON



LOW (LOCAL) IMPACT

- Provincial Govt Dept responsible for tourism portfolio, e.g. DEDT or MPTA
- Local Pvt Sector org with tourism focus, e.g. Kruger Lowveld
- Local agencies involved, e.g. SANParks



MEDIUM IMPACT

- Provincial Govt Dept responsible for tourism portfolio, e.g. DEDT or MPTA
- Local Pvt Sector org with tourism focus, e.g. Kruger Lowveld
- Local agencies involved, e.g. SANParks



HIGH IMPACT

- National Govt Dept responsible for tourism portfolio, e.g. DT or SA Tourism
- National Pvt Sector org with tourism focus, e.g. TBCSA, SATSA, FEDHASA
- National agencies involved, e.g. SANParks

KEY MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Existing templates will be modified to develop key messages about the incident based on the initial impact assessment.

Messaging should reinforce positives and be action / solution oriented.

Message emphasis will shift throughout the response phase – from initial visitor safety to open for business in the final stage.

- Do not downplay the severity of the crisis or dismiss concerns.
- Always provide accurate and up-to-date information.
- Demonstrate empathy for those affected by the crisis.
- Ensure that messaging is consistent and aligned across all channels and stakeholders.
- Time is critical. A prompt response can help manage the narrative, but don't "react".
- Avoid making commitments or promises that you cannot guarantee.
- Do not respond to journalists' Q&As. Rather create a brief holding statement and distribute this consistently when asked for comment.

KEY POINTS IN MESSAGING DON'T'S

Crime is a reality everywhere and is not unique to South Africa. Our destination is still safer than others.

Those travellers should have known better not to go there, self drive, do X or Y. They should have been more careful.

It's not our fault that that area is unsafe and there's very little we can do about it.

This will never happen again. We will take measures to ensure that tourists are completely safe when visiting...

People are blowing this completely out of proportion. It's not as bad as they're saying.

We don't have any comment.

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KEY POINTS IN MESSAGING DO'S

Prioritised safety: We hold the safety and security of our guests at the pinnacle of our tourism industry efforts

Collaborative efforts: To that end, both govt and the private sector are working purposefully to enhance safety measures, e.g. SECURA Traveller and tourism monitors.

Safety education: We believe in empowering our visitors with the necessary information to ensure their safety.

Transparent communication: We maintain a transparent line of comms about safety measures to keep travellers well informed.

Award-winning destination: SA has enjoyed great popularity amongst travellers with such noteworthy accolades as the 2023 Telegraph Travel Awards.

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FESTIVE SEASON APPROACH

MINI COMMS TASK TEAM CREATED:

- **Zara Nicholson:** Minister Comms
- **Thandiwe Mathibela:** SA Tourism
- **Natalia Rosa:** Big Ambitions
- **Comms Rep:** Dept of Tourism

ACTIVITIES OVER FESTIVE SEASON:

- Establish a contact list for and make contact with provincial and local tourism communications focal points – includes government departments and private sector
- Establish contact with the national incident management team
- Establish contact list for police in hotspots and link to national incident management team
- Update templates for the variety of potential risks that could occur over Festive Season
- Select, inform and update spokespeople of their roles and the messaging, along with their communications contact points
- Seed media with “positive” narrative of tourism over Festive Season
- Execute crisis communications plan as and when required
- Update media monitoring and media enquiry logs
- Keep stakeholders informed of progress and approach

TEAM ACTIVATION PROCESS

01

**National incident management team notified of tourist incident.
They activate comms team (email & Whatsapp) and include the comms team on incident management Whatsapp group.**

02

**Comms Team undertakes impact assessment to determine level of response required and communicates with local comms stakeholders. This could include local govt, local associations, SANParks.
Informs incident management team & stakeholders of approach**

03

**Execute communications plan.
Prepare messaging, statement and bulletins
Update spokespeople, incident management and other stakeholders
Monitor media and social media
Send updated releases to media and stakeholders.**

04

**Continue to liaise with incident management stakeholders through WhatsApp and update comms as required.
Inform stakeholders of any updates provided.
Provide support to local comms stakeholders and spokespeople.
Keep media log (coverage and enquiries) updated.**

MEDIA RELATIONS

- Set up media monitoring
- Establish an update a media database
- Make it easy for media to contact the task team
- Do not respond to journalists' Q&As. Rather create a brief holding statement and distribute this consistently when asked for comment.
- Handle all media queries and requests – centralise.
- Work with spokesperson to integrate tourism messaging.
- Prep holding statement, FAQs and talking points
- Logs and document all media enquiries on request log.
- As soon as it's 'safe' start seeding media with positive messaging on tourism, e.g. tourist arrival numbers.



POSITIVE NARRATIVES

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ANGLES

- South Africans celebrating the festive season with travel, not trinkets
- Performance of tourism across the country's tourism hotspots – Garden Route, Kruger, Cape Town, Durban (interview airlines, Nightsbridge, accommodation)
- Family festive fun across the country: Where South Africans are travelling to
- Epic road trips that have to be on your festive season checklist in 2024
- Festivals, events, etc happening around the country
- Any product news from trade on new experiences / products
- South Africa for every kind of traveller: round-up of different destinations / holidays per segment
- Little known local treasures that need to be on your must-visit list this festive season
- South Africa for the adventurer: a round-up of the bucket-list adventures to close of 2023
- South Africa's amazing dorpies and kasies to put on your must-visit list
- From mountain peaks to the sea: the treasures of nature offered by South Africa

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS

- Disseminate all media releases, FAQs to tourism stakeholders
- Keep primary agencies up to date on the impact of the crisis on sector and comms activities and ensure that these are distributed to their members
- Leverage a stakeholder communications matrix prepared in the preparedness phase.
- Educate the trade not to “panic” and not to distribute unverified information or to escalate to appropriate channels to check veracity.
- Enlist trade’s help in positive narratives and sourcing media articles – to be sent to centralised email address.



QUESTIONS

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