



TOURISM OPERATORS CRISIS COMMS TOOLKIT

2025

Visit
Sunshine
Coast

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Acronyms

DTIS - Department of Tourism Innovation and Sport

LDMG - Local Disaster Management Group

LTOs - Local Tourism Organisations

RTOs - Regional Tourism Organisations

TEQ - Tourism and Events Queensland

QAS - Queensland Ambulance Service

QFES - Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

QPS - Queensland Police Service

QTIC - Queensland Tourism Industry Council

VSC - Visit Sunshine Coast

Purpose of this toolkit

The purpose of this communication toolkit is to prepare for, respond to and recover from potential crises and disasters so operators can get back to business sooner following an incident. The toolkit provides suggested communication steps and sample messaging to use before, during and after a disaster strikes.

Examples of a Crisis:

Death or injury

of a visitor through an accident or deliberate action

Threats

to the safety and well-being of visitors and the community

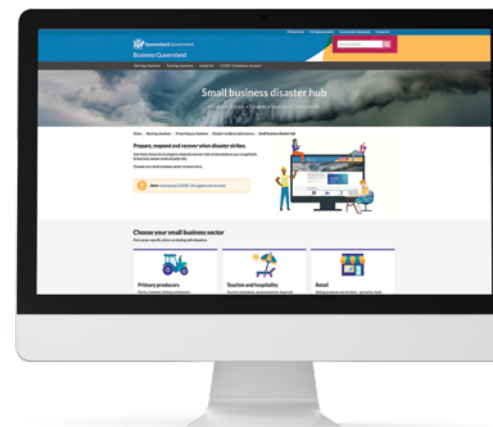
Negative events

likely to receive media attention

Natural

(eg. cyclone, fire, flood) and man-made disasters (eg. pollution, violence, industrial action)

Key threats tourism operators may experience include the above. For more information, steps and messaging to handle all other potential crises go to [Apple Store](#) or [Google Play](#) to download the Small Business Disaster Hub app. Or visit business.qld.gov.au/disasterhub to use the website.



Download from
Google Play



Download from
App Store

How to prepare, respond and recover from a crisis

VSC's approach to crisis and issues management is based on the principle of open and honest communication. Communication in a crisis aims to minimise the impact of the issue without compromising trust so visitor safety and confidence can be quickly restored.



Prepare

- Make a plan to identify and prepare for likely incidents and risks, including evacuation plans
- Check your insurance and finances are enough to cover your business
- Plan for power outages, loss of deliveries, access and alternate ways to operate
- Practice how to manage potential crises to determine agreed responses
- Ensure you have appropriate [workplace health and safety](#) and [staff code of conduct](#) policies in place
- Ensure staff know what to do in a natural disaster.



Respond

- Confirm the facts first and assess the impact via emergency alerts, social media or media coverage
- Monitor emergency updates
- Ensure staff and guests are safe and know what to do in a natural disaster
- Visit the [Small Business Disaster Hub's tourism and hospitality checklist](#) for more detailed actions to take and suggested messaging
- If the incident is likely to impact tourism in the region, contact your Local Tourism Organisation (LTO) or Regional Tourism organisation (RTO) for advice on how to respond and what to say
- Update your social media to advise on any operational impacts
- Suspend advertising or scheduled posts
- Log media queries and respond once messaging prepared.



Recover

- Assess the impact on your business – photograph any damage
- Monitor ongoing impact and media coverage
- Regroup with LTO/RTO to determine recovery steps and agree messaging so the industry has a unified voice
- Apply for financial assistance and/or business grants
- Use photos and videos with time stamps to show when open for business – pictures are worth 1000 words
- Consider lessons learned and update crisis plans as required.

Crisis Communication Tips

Be open and honest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be accurate and factual. • Be honest and transparent and admit when lessons need to be learned. • But also emphasise the actions you're taking to avoid it happening again.
People come first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your concern for people before property and profits. • Convey empathy for anyone injured or killed. • Emphasise the safety and wellbeing of staff and visitors as your first priority.
Speak with one voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with your LTO or RTO first to have a united voice so the media can't divide and conquer. • Coordinate messaging centrally.
Remain calm and flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be calm and measured to convey a sense of control and readiness. • Avoid inflammatory language like 'crisis', 'emergency' or 'fire of epic proportions'. • Put the crisis into context – is the incident limited to a specific area? • But be sensitive to impacts and perceptions.
Challenge untrue statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the media and correct inaccuracies as they arise. • If the incident is not a threat to visitors downplay the response.
The media loves a hero or a villain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give credit to other agencies or groups working to respond to an incident. • Promote the heroic actions of emergency services or general public.

Dealing with the media

Think about the below tips before responding to media queries:

- Before responding, get the journalist's name, media organisation, contacts and deadline and ask what questions they have. Tell them when you'll come back to them with a response.
- Check in with your LTO or RTO to seek advice on what you should or shouldn't say publicly and to provide a united message for the tourism industry.
- Only respond to tourism related media queries and refer other questions to the appropriate agency.
- Stick to the points you want to make when answering questions. You don't have to say what they want you to say.
- Avoid saying 'no comment', you can instead use:
 - "I don't have that information to confirm right now".
 - "What I can tell you is..."
 - "You're asking me to speculate, which I won't do".
 - "That's private information and we respect people's privacy".
 - Provide written responses to journalists if they are confrontational.
- Consider doing a meet and greet with local journalists so they are more likely to contact you direct to hear your side of the story in a crisis. They are also more likely to cover positive stories about your business.
- Remember it's always harder to respond to a media story once it's out there.

Social media crisis tips

Natural disasters

- Turn off scheduled posts when notified about disaster
- Have a social media post ready to use at short notice to alert followers about key information
- Never post photos of flooded or burned areas – covered enough by the media
- Post crisis – show real-time photos of open businesses and attractions
- Include date/time in photo captions to show what region looks like now
- Post success stories, holiday events or relevant community fundraisers
- Create a vlog encouraging visitors to return and that the region is good to go
- Promote anniversary – where we are now success stories
- Use hashtags for unified response

Reputational incidents

- Be quick to correct or remove false/misleading information
- Know when to walk away from social media responses to avoid a debate – move conversations to private message, if appropriate
- If posts go viral, don't stay quiet – say what you're doing to fix the incident and how you'll avoid a repeat
- Don't be defensive, remain professional and polite
- Highlight how long you've successfully operated without similar incident

Tips to create a vlog

Follow the below steps from Tourism and Events Queensland to shoot a vlog encouraging visitors to return to your region or business following a natural disaster or other crisis.

Script	Before you start filming, write a brief script on what you want to say. Make it authentic and inviting.
How to film it	Use your smartphone – set your camera to the highest resolution possible. Be sure to have someone else film the video for you or use a tripod. No selfies.
Framing	Frame your video to showcase what makes your location or experience unique. For example, if you're at the beach go on the sand. If it's in a rainforest show a view of the trees.
Orientation	Stand 1 to 2 metres away from the camera and frame the person so you capture the background. Use either landscape or portrait depending on what works best.
Lighting	To catch the best light consider filming in the early morning or late afternoon. Make sure the sun is shining on your background. Avoid filming in shadows to make sure your face is well lit.
Branding	If you can, capture your brand or signage in the frame, even if it's just on your shirt.
Sound	Film in a quiet place to avoid background noise so you can be heard clearly.
Tone	Remember to be honest, informative and friendly as you're personally inviting visitors to your part of the world.
Promote	To promote your video share it with tourism organisations and post it on your social media and encourage your followers to share it.
Example video script cues	<p>"As you can see, we're now absolutely open for business..."</p> <p>"Here's a taste of what to expect..."</p> <p>"Reporting from on the ground: We're open, it's sunny and there's plenty to do..."</p> <p>"We may have had a bit weather, but that won't stop the adventures..."</p> <p>"To help our region get back on our feet, we'd love you to come visit. We're open for business and ready to welcome visitors..."</p>

Messaging to use in a disaster or crisis

If appropriate, you can use the below messaging on your socials and with visitors, stakeholders and the media.

Visitor / staff death or injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are saddened to confirm that XXX of our guest/s were injured/killed in an incident this morning. Our thoughts are with them, their families and the other guests on the tour. We are working with authorities to assist in any way we can. We have suspended our tours and will work closely with authorities regarding our upcoming tours. We would also like to thank emergency services for their immediate response in assisting our affected guests so quickly.
Natural disaster	<p>Threat to visitor safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should consider leaving the area if it is safe to do so. Check for road closures before you leave by visiting the xxxx Council emergency dashboard or qldtraffic.qld.gov.au. To book a taxi call XXX or an airport shuttle bus call XXX. For updates on the severe weather/floods/fires please visit the XXX Council emergency dashboard or listen to the local ABC radio station on XXX. If you have no option but to stay, follow these steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your accommodation provider to ensure it is safe for you to stay. If you can't stay in your accommodation, find the nearest emergency evacuation centre by visiting the XXX emergency dashboard (or provide these details to them and travel options to get there). Prepare an emergency kit including (water in sealed containers, canned food to last three days, can opener, medications, toiletry supplies, torch, mobile phone charger and portable power pack for charging phones). Watch/listen for updates and follow the advice of authorities. Contact your travel providers to find out more about cancellations or updates to bookings. <p>Inaccurate media reports of disaster impact – no threat to visitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our thoughts go out to XXX in their recovery efforts. We hope they'll be back on their feet in no time. But Queensland is a big area, in fact we're nearly five times the size of Japan and Germany. A fire, cyclone or flood in one area can have no impact in other areas. While our friends in XXX get back on their feet, come and visit us in XXX. We're open for business and ready to welcome visitors.
Negative events – reputational incident	<p>Negative visitor comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We're sorry to hear about your experience with (include details). We take pride in our (services/ products) and take feedback from customers seriously. Please message us directly so we can help you resolve this issue. <p>Rumour driven incident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rumours that our business is experiencing financial difficulties (or other rumours) are completely unfounded and incorrect. We are open for business as usual. If customers or clients have any concerns, please feel free to contact us directly. <p>Bullying or harassment incident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We take this matter very seriously and have a zero-tolerance policy towards workplace (bullying/ harassment). The person involved has been suspended (or placed on leave) pending the outcome of the investigation.

Negative events – reputational incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are cooperating with authorities and have launched an independent investigation into the matter. • Due to privacy considerations we cannot discuss the investigation publicly at this stage. • As an initial step, we have put in place additional procedures for all staff members to provide appropriate information so this doesn't happen again. • We will also review our policies and procedures to introduce mandatory ethics and workplace culture training as part of our staff inductions”.
Major health events	<p>Food poisoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working closely with authorities to investigate this incident to determine the exact source and cause. • The safety and security of our (staff, customers or guests) is our first priority. • Our practices and standards are in line with the strictest health and safety regulations. • If anyone who has eaten (provide specific details of food source and timings) and is experiencing symptoms of (list symptoms), we advise you seek medical assistance. • We sincerely apologise for any distress this incident has caused and our thoughts are with those who have been affected. • We will continue making every effort to abide by these standards and will update our food handling processes if they are found to be responsible for the incident, to prevent this from happening again. <p>Health outbreak at your premises (Legionnaires, COVID-19...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The safety, health and wellbeing of our staff and customers is our first priority. • We are working closely with authorities to identify the source of the outbreak and providing every assistance to help them with contact tracing of customers who may be affected. • We have followed all directives issued by Queensland Health to protect our staff and customers and will continue to do so. • On advice from Queensland Health we will be temporarily closing our business and completing a deep clean of all surfaces and areas on the premises.
Cyber attack	<p>Client data breach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are contacting you to let you know a data breach has affected your personal data. On (date), we detected a breach of our organisation's IT security. As a result, some of your information has been accessed (provide type of data if possible – e.g. contact, bank details). • We've launched a full investigation to resolve the issue and we're working closely with authorities (the Australian Cyber Security Centre, the Australian Federal Police and/or the Australian Information Commissioner). • We're taking the following steps to protect you by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engaging an external cyber security agency to ensure we've taken all possible measures to minimise the impact of this security breach and reduce the risk of it happening again • continuing to monitor for suspicious activity and coordinating with relevant authorities and agencies • continuing to improve our systems to detect and prevent unauthorised access to user information. • We take our obligations to safeguard your personal data very seriously. We recommend you consider taking the following steps to protect any further access to your (personal information or account details). As further safeguards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update your password – use at least 12 characters including numbers, symbols, capital letters and lower-case letters (avoid using date of birth or names) • review and update your contact methods for resetting passwords • review your account transactions and let us know if you notice anything suspicious • don't open attachments or click on links from unknown sources • ignore unsolicited communications that ask for your personal data or refer you a web page asking for personal data • also report anything out of the ordinary to (provide details). • We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this breach may have caused. If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us via (email and/or phone). • We'll keep you informed if there is any further information about this breach.

Who to call in a crisis

If in doubt or when an incident is likely to have a lasting impact on the region's tourism industry contact Visit Sunshine Coast or your Local Tourism Organisation for advice and assistance. For example, if an incident is likely to:

- Disrupt tourism activities or visits to the region over the short or long term
- Negatively impact the Sunshine Coast's reputation nationally or internationally
- Result in potential job losses
- Cause visitor injuries or deaths
- Place into question the region's safety and/or desirability as a destination.

Visit Sunshine Coast and your Local Tourism Organisations are ready to support operators to prepare for, respond to and recover from a crisis. Assistance includes:





- Helping to manage communication with the media and stakeholders during and after a natural disaster or major crisis
- Advising on crisis response and recovery steps
- Liaising with other tourism and government agencies to help manage media and wider communications
- Advocating for regional tourism funding and disaster and business recovery grants.

See tourism organisation and emergency contacts for who to call in a crisis below.

Tourism organisation contacts

ORGANISATION	EMAIL	PHONE
Visit Sunshine Coast	info@visitsunshinecoast.com	(07) 5458 8800
Tourism Noosa	info@visitnoosa.com.au	1300 066 672
Destination Gympie Region	tourism.info@gympie.qld.gov.au	1800 444 222

Emergency resources

ORGANISATION	RESOURCES	PHONE
Sunshine Coast Council Disaster Ready resources	Sunshine Coast Disaster Hub	(07) 5475 7272
Noosa Shire Council	Noosa Council Disaster and Emergencies	(07) 5329 6500
Gympie Regional Council	Gympie Disaster Dashboard	1300 307 800
Small Business Disaster Hub	Small Business Disaster Hub - tourism & hospitality	   

Emergency contacts

BODY	CONTACT NUMBER	WEBSITE
Emergency - Fire, Police, Ambulance	000	
Queensland Government SES	132 500	www.qld.gov.au/emergency www.qld.gov.au/alerts
Queensland Fire & Emergency Services	13 74 68	https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au Twitter: @QldFES
Queensland Health	13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)	https://www.health.qld.gov.au Twitter: @qldhealthnews
Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit	1300 017 190	
Sunshine Coast University Hospital	(07) 5202 0000	
Bureau of Meteorology	(07) 3239 8700	www.bom.gov.au
Queensland Police Services	131 444 Media - (07) 3015 2444	www.police.qld.gov.au Twitter: @qpsmedia
Road Conditions	13 19 40	www.131940.qld.gov.au Twitter: @131940QLD
Energex	13 19 62	www.energex.com.au Twitter: @ENERGEX
Dept. Natural Resources Mine & Energy	13 74 68	www.dnrme.qld.gov.au Twitter: @EnergyQld Twitter: @waterqld Twitter: @DNRMEmediaQld
Maritime Safety Queensland	13 74 68	www.msq.qld.gov.au

The background is a solid teal color with a pattern of stylized, overlapping leaves in a slightly darker shade of teal. The leaves are arranged in a dense, organic manner, filling the entire frame.

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