



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CIVIL AVIATION, PORTS AND MARINE**

**TOURISM DEPARTMENT**

**TOURISM RISK MANAGEMENT SECTION**

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, PREPAREDNESS**

**AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**Communication procedures for the tourism sector**

# Disaster Risk Management Plan

## ***Crisis Communication Procedures for the Tourism Sector***

### **Introduction**

The best way to prepare for a crisis is when there isn't one. Being prepared also means being prepared to communicate. When a crisis occurs you will want the different people to whom you relate to see you as being confident and in control under emergency conditions.

This perception will enhance your credibility and establish trust and confidence in your operation.

***In order to be perceived as being in control you must be prepared to communicate effectively.***

A crisis event is the first disaster. How reports are carried in the Media can be the second! Experience has shown that greater and more lasting damage to a tourism business or tourist destination can arise from the way in which a disaster is reported in the Media or by disgruntled guests. This influences your image in the market place, which in turn, determines clients including potential holiday makers' decisions and eventually the flow of future businesses.

Some businesses, tourism establishments and operations may already have their own Public Relations guidelines and it is naturally expected that the procedures outlined here are adapted where necessary to suit individual cases.

***Media reports can often result in greater economic fallout for the tourist destination as well as your business than the effect of the disaster itself!***

### **THE PHASES OF COMMUNICATION PREPAREDNESS**

Several activities **must be** carried out and necessary measures **must be** put in place long before **A CRISIS/DISASTER** has emerged or is anywhere near.

***These include the following:***

**1. Conduct a Communications Risk Analysis.**

- ❖ Ensure that you have appropriate and sufficient telecommunication equipment on your property. Equipment should be operational at all times. Do regular daily checks and have appropriate back-ups.
- ❖ Have up to date (a) guest list both those in house, external and on arrival; Their names, room numbers, family contacts, special needs including special services to offer.  
(b) Employees list; those on duty and on roster/shift; their names, addresses and contacts.
- ❖ Have readily accessible contact numbers for key relevant agencies and persons.
- ❖ Have readily accessible contact number of key persons including those in hotels, DMCS, boat charters, restaurant etc. on the island as well as neighbouring island resorts.
- ❖ Ensure that you have updated information kits available at your establishment. The kits should include items such as fact sheets, photographs of key personnel and operating policy statements, data such as occupancy levels and other features of the property including information such as maps of evacuation routes and fire safety notices etc.
- ❖ Identify areas of features of your property/establishments which may attract bad press if placed under Media microscope and ensure that the management team and staff correct all shortcomings in the areas in which the property may be vulnerable to bad press

**2. Develop a Crisis Communication Policy**

Your crisis communication policy should include statements such as:-

- ❖ Our top priority at all times is to protect human life. We always attend to the well-being of our guests, our employees and the general public first and foremost.
- ❖ We will ensure full cooperation with all stakeholders during the crisis, e.g. the tourism sector, Government Agencies (including ***all national***

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*emergency responders*) all tours operators and locals DMcs, the Media and all our business partners.

- ❖ Information and details of crisis will be disseminated as soon as possible
- ❖ The management will be forthright at all times, and will not seek to withhold significant facts from the Media or any if it's public.
- ❖ The appointed spokesperson or deputy should be the only ones authorised to make statements to the Media.

### 3. Designate a Room or Area at your Establishment/Business location, that can serve as a Crisis Communication Centre

- ❖ This centre should have computers with website links, television, radio and emergency communication facilities, i.e. satellite phones
- ❖ As much as possible ensure that latest communication services consisting of new IT technology including New mobile Applications such SMS,internet inclusive of Social Media Network is available to facilitate instantaneous communication and messaging.

### 4. Appoint a Spokesperson

- ❖ Determine who your spokesperson will be. Such person must have full knowledge or access to full knowledge of the situation and full authority to decide ***what and how much to say***
- ❖ He or she must be a senior executive, familiar with the business and marketing needs of the establishment/property and well conversant with its policies. ***All enquiries should be referred to him or her***
- ❖ ***Avoid*** having more than one spokesperson. This will ensure that there is consistent in the information you say or give to the public. However it may be necessary and practical to assign a deputy in case of the unavailability of the spokesperson.

- ❖ **Availability and Accessibility.** The spokesperson should be both available and accessible to the Media and be prepared to give timely responses to enquiries.

## 5. Brief your Staff

- ❖ As soon as the key spokesperson has been appointed, he or she should meet with the staff.
- ❖ Staff should be informed that **all enquiries** from the Media, Government Agencies including key emergency responders, Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Department, STB, international tour operators as well as local DMcs, and the general members of the public regarding an event or incident **should be referred to the spokesperson**
- ❖ Impress on staff and make them understand why it is important that they should not be giving out information other than through the spokesperson. Describe to them the dangers of rumours and unsubstantiated reports and the damage this can do to the business which will eventually jeopardised their employment.

## 6. Train Key Staff

- ❖ Hold a training session for certain staff in key positions especially those that have direct contact with stakeholders or clients. E.g. receptionists, and frontline staff as they are most likely to receive a lot of enquiries. They need to know how to filter these enquiries.
- ❖ One recommended response will be “let me refer you to Mr or Ms X who will be able to give you up to date information on this”.

## 7. Get The Staff on Your Side

- ❖ Advise the staff how work shift will be managed and get them to be involved by keeping them informed and reassured.
- ❖ Even with the only one spokesperson rule, staff will talk. You will want them to say that you are a caring establishment.

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## 8. Coordinate Communication Procedures With Your Overseas Representatives/Partners

- ❖ Whom should they contact; Provide them with the name of the in-house spokesperson.
- ❖ Ensure that the information to be provided is verified by the designated in house spokesperson.
- ❖ It would also be wise to also provide information to the Tourism Department's Focal Point and STB's overseas representatives in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and if the establishment has overseas head offices the name of the contact persons should also be provided to them. ***However before any information is released to them, it is important that there is prior verification to ascertain accuracy and synergy.***
- ❖ Decide when and how often situation reports will be sent to them
- ❖ Decide how communication with the establishment resort should be effected i.e. via satellite phones, internet i.e. via e-mail, website, and landline or by fax etc.
- ❖ The name of the authorised overseas spokesperson(s) representing the establishment/property who will approve and release the information to the Media in the respective overseas markets.

## 9. Coordinate communication procedures with the key National Agencies

- ❖ Ensure that the Tourism sector focal point for disaster risk management and DRDM is well informed of your communication procedures and is kept in the loop of prior information before it is released to the Media and other partners/representatives by the establishment/property.
- ❖ All communication, information or enquiries should either be through the focal point or directly through DRDM. ***It is important to note that representatives of the various key responders including the tourism focal point are represented at the NEOC (National Emergency Operation Centre)*** and there is an appointed officer for communication and he or she is also the spokesperson for the NEOC. Try to resist too many contact points so as to avoid conflicting information going out and coming in.

- ❖ In regards the establishment/property the above mentioned contacts should be advised of the following:-
  - Whom should they contact; Name of the in house spokesperson, name of the general manager/manager of the establishment or business. In case there are Public relations offices in other locations they need to know who to contact there as well,
  - Name of the spokesperson or person verifying the information.
  - The name of the overseas spokesperson who will verify and approve/authorize releases to the Media in the overseas markets.
  - When and how often will situation reports be sent to them
  - Inform them how communication with the establishment/ tourism business should be effected i.e. via satellite phones, internet i.e. via e-mail, website, and landline or by fax etc.

## **10. Prepare a Press List**

- ❖ Prepare a list of key local Media houses and key contact persons
- ❖ Prepare a list of key overseas reporters as those available from the Seychelles Tourism Board.
- ❖ Post on your command centre Information board a list of relevant websites and contacts of key focal persons.