

**PREPARING  
FOR A CRISIS:  
TIPS, DOS AND DON'TS  
FOR WYOMING'S TRAVEL  
AND TOURISM INDUSTRY**



Office of Tourism

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## OVERVIEW

The Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT) has a comprehensive and current crisis plan that is used to share information with members of the media and public, as well as our partners, stakeholders and other agency partners.

To help assist our industry partners with managing a crisis when it arises, we've put together an industry-facing plan that includes knowing how to prepare for a crisis, dos and don'ts and a sample news release.

## PREPARING FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The best time to prepare for a crisis is before a crisis occurs. While each crisis will be different and may need to be handled slightly differently, it's always advisable to have a plan that can be implemented as quickly as possible.

There are **five steps** to prepare for a crisis:

1. **Have a plan of action.** Regardless of the crisis—whether it be manmade or natural—you need to have a crisis communication plan that can be put into action as needed. It's advisable that you review and update your crisis plan on an annual basis.
2. **Build a crisis management team.** Recommended members of your crisis team include your PR or communication manager, social media manager, owner or director. Feel free to utilize the resources and communication staff at WOT as you deal with crises in your communities or regions.
3. **Respond quickly, but thoughtfully.** At times, you may have to release bad news. If a crisis is affecting your business or community, it's best that your audience (consumer or business-to-business) hears the news from you.
4. **Work cooperatively with the media by answering their inquiries in a timely manner.** In addition, if you see that media have inaccurate headlines or stories regarding the crisis at hand, reach out to them and ask them to change it. Provide regular updates via news releases, social media, etc.
5. **Stay calm and don't panic.** Establish a central location where all your information can be found, making it easy for members of the public and media to access the latest materials, news releases, updates, etc.

## **CRISIS MANAGEMENT: DOS, DON'TS AND TIPS**

### ***The Dos***

- Do highlight where the incident is located; note that it's not affecting much of Wyoming.
- Do remain calm and helpful when visitors inquire about the crisis/incident.
- Do remain updated on the latest information, including road/destination/attraction closures and any recreation/camping/fishing restrictions.
- Do share information and updates from WOT (and other agencies) with all front-line employees (service station staff, hotel employees, visitor center employees, restaurant managers/hosts/wait staff, local guides, etc.).
- Do highlight areas of Wyoming that are unaffected by the crisis; encourage visitors to explore those areas.
- Do encourage tourists to continue their travel to Wyoming.
- Do assure visitors that public safety is the first and foremost priority; if it's open, it's safe.
- Do be prepared to talk to the media, particularly if your area/business is located near the crisis.
- Do direct media to fire officials, emergency personnel or management agencies for the most current information.
- Do be honest and take care to provide factual and accurate information to the media.
- Do focus on and emphasize the positive – what's open, what's unaffected, the role wildfires play in the ecosystem, progress made, etc.
- Do, as much as possible, focus on the visitor experience.

### ***The Don'ts***

- Don't provide false information. If you don't know something, say you don't know it; never speculate.
- Don't focus or dwell on the negative. Instead, help visitors have a positive experience in Wyoming despite the crisis.
- Don't blow the crisis out of proportion; stick to what you know.

### ***Tips for Working with the Public and Media at Times of Crisis***

- Know what the main message is for the crisis at hand and incorporate it into every response, whether that be in conversations, media interviews or through social media messaging, etc.
- Keep your responses simple and clear.
- Always verify facts with official sources; don't believe hearsay or rumors.
- Stay calm, always.
- Control your messaging: be sure your management, front-line employees, social media managers, communities, etc. are all on the same page so you're sharing one consistent message.
- Encourage visitors to follow all rules, regulations and best practices when visiting Wyoming. Examples of this include staying on boardwalks, carrying (and knowing how to use) bear spray, extinguishing fires, etc.
- If you are unable to answer a question from a member of the media due to personal, legal or confidential reasons, don't say "No comment." Instead say, "Due to legal matters, we are not able to comment at this time." Or "As confirmation of information is still pending, we are not able to make an official comment at this time."
- Do not play favorites with the media. Make information available to all media at the same time.

## **BE PREPARED TO TALK TO THE MEDIA**

Below are some potential questions that you may receive during a news conference, via phone or email from members of the media:

- How did the disaster start?
- What is the current situation?
- How close can media get to the affected area?
- What amount of damage has been done to land, private dwellings or community buildings?
- What's the anticipated cost of the disaster? (actual and/or economic impact)
- What type of equipment is being used to assist with the crisis?
- How large is the crew on the ground at the crisis site?
- How many acres are being affected?
- How many residents or visitors are displaced?
- How many people have been hurt or killed due to the disaster?
- What road are open?
- How are you working to help displaced visitors?
- How will the federal government shutdown affect your business or the traveler experience?

When answering media inquiries, be sure to focus the response on the factual and positive messages being utilized by WOT, partners and stakeholders.

Examples include:

- Most roads and tourism destinations remain open and unaffected by the XX (fire, flood, etc.).
- While XX may be closed, other destinations to explore in Wyoming include XX, XX and XX.
- While this fire is affecting two percent of Grand Teton National Park, 99.9 percent of Wyoming is unaffected by the fire. Visitors are encouraged to explore other areas, like XX, XX and XX.
- Visitors are being asked to avoid wildlife areas, but can find incredible Wyoming experiences at XX, XX and XX.
- The closure of Highway 91 is temporary and it will be reopened as soon as possible.
- While there are small fires burning in Wyoming, they are located in the remote backcountry and do not pose a threat to residents or visitors. All park entrances and roads are open to the public, with no visitor services being affected.
- Focus on the good in Wyoming. For example, "Wyoming is known for its generous residents who go out of their way to help those in need. People reach out with compassion, teamwork and generosity and their response to this incident is no exception."
- Remember that emergency teams train and prepare for these types of events, even though they seldom occur.
- Remind visitors to follow all fire regulations, extinguish fires completely and be safe.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES**

### ***Wyoming Office of Tourism***

Diane Shober, Executive Director: [diane.shober@wyo.gov](mailto:diane.shober@wyo.gov); 307.777.2808, 307.214.3741

Tia Troy, Media and PR Manager: [tia.troy@wyo.gov](mailto:tia.troy@wyo.gov); 307.777.2831; 307.214.8907

Michell Howard, Senior Director of Brand Strategy: [michell.howard@wyo.gov](mailto:michell.howard@wyo.gov); 307.777.2855; 307.631.1582

### ***Office of the Governor***

Chris Mickey, Communications Director: [chris.mickey1@wyo.gov](mailto:chris.mickey1@wyo.gov); 307.777.2859; 307.630.5393

### ***Tourism Websites***

Wyoming – [TravelWyoming.com](http://TravelWyoming.com)

Montana – [VisitMT.com](http://VisitMT.com)

Nebraska – [VisitNebraska.org](http://VisitNebraska.org)

Idaho – [VisitIdaho.org](http://VisitIdaho.org)

Utah – [Travel.Utah.gov](http://Travel.Utah.gov)

South Dakota – [TravelSouthDakota.com](http://TravelSouthDakota.com)

Colorado – [Colorado.com](http://Colorado.com)

### ***Wildfire Website***

National Interagency Fire Center – [nifc.gov](http://nifc.gov)

Incident Information System (InciWeb)– [inciweb.nwccg.gov](http://inciweb.nwccg.gov)

### ***Governmental Agency Websites***

State of Wyoming – [Wyoming.gov](http://Wyoming.gov)

WYDOT – [wyoroad.info](http://wyoroad.info)

Wyoming State Parks – [wyoparks.state.wy.us](http://wyoparks.state.wy.us)

Wyoming Office of Homeland Security – [wyohomelandsecurity.state.wy.us](http://wyohomelandsecurity.state.wy.us)

U.S.F.S. – [fs.fed.us](http://fs.fed.us)

National Park Service – [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)

Yellowstone National Park – [nps.gov/yell](http://nps.gov/yell)

Grand Teton National Park – [nps.gov/grte](http://nps.gov/grte)

BLM – [blm.gov/Wyoming](http://blm.gov/Wyoming)

## **SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

\*Add time, if critical and breaking

*Media Contact:*

Primary name, email, phone numbers

Secondary name, email, phone numbers

### **Headline**

*Subhead for Release with Additional Supporting Information*

**Date—location of release**—At approximately XX p.m. today, XX officials announced the closure of Highway XX as well as the closure of background campsites and evacuation of XX facilities due to increase XX danger. At this time, officials do not know how long the closure will be in effect. The safety of citizens, tourists and staff remain a top priority.

For the most up-to-date information, visit XXXX or call XXX.XXX.XXXX. The latest information is also being shared on twitter at @XXXX.

All visitor services, hotels and businesses remain open. Visitors with reservations at the campgrounds in the closed areas are advised to contact the business directly to determine alternative lodging options.

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## **WYOMING OFFICE OF TOURISM COMMUNICATION CONTACT**

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