

The  
Florida Keys  
& Key West  
... come as you are<sup>®</sup>

# ADDENDUM: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

June 2025



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# INTRODUCTION: WHY HAVE A PLAN?

## WHY HAVE A CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN?

Tourism is the economic lifeblood of the Florida Keys—fueling our economy, supporting jobs, and shaping our vibrant island communities. To ensure long-term stability, the **Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC)** is committed to strengthening and safeguarding the tourism sector, especially in the face of natural disasters and other unforeseen events.

Experience has shown that without effective preparation, response, and recovery strategies, crises can severely disrupt local businesses and communities. A coordinated communications effort is essential to rebuilding traveler confidence, restoring economic activity, and accelerating recovery.

With a significant number of TDC stakeholders across the Florida Keys & Key West—and the growing frequency of natural disasters—the region’s tourism industry remains highly vulnerable. Proactive planning is critical to ensure we can respond swiftly and appropriately when a crisis occurs.

**Monroe County Emergency Management (MCEM)** and its **Public Information Office (PIO)** takes the lead in communicating with affected residents and visitors during a crisis. The TDC provides vital support, sharing accurate and timely messaging with tourism-related stakeholders, including lodging partners, attractions, restaurants, other visitor-facing businesses, as well as with tourism-focused media. The TDC also plays an important role in post-crisis recovery by helping to reestablish the destination’s tourism brand and inviting visitors back responsibly.

This TDC Crisis Communications Plan provides a framework for managing internal, stakeholder and public-facing messaging during sensitive situations. It is not a safety or emergency operations manual, but rather a strategic communications resource for:

- Understanding objectives and preparedness priorities;
- Distinguishing between issues, emergencies and crises with varying alert levels;
- Defining the communications chain of command with emergency response teams and TDC roles;
- Determining if, when, and how to communicate with key audiences;
- Reviewing sample scenarios for a natural disaster, an infrastructure failure and an environmental threat;
- Ensuring swift and accurate messaging across all teams, channels, and platforms;
- Activating recovery phase action plans across marketing platforms.

By following this guide, the TDC and its partners can ensure clear, timely communication that protects the Florida Keys’ tourism economy and supports long-term community resilience.

# INTRODUCTION: OBJECTIVES & PREPAREDNESS

## KEY OBJECTIVES WHEN MANAGING A CRISIS

- Protect life, the environment, property and reputation;
- Ensure accurate, timely, and consistent communication to all TDC audiences;
- Support MCEM with supplemental messaging for tourism stakeholders and visitors;
- Coordinate with tourism stakeholders to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the crisis;
- Minimize misinformation;
- Support recovery, preserve long-term tourism economic stability and visitor confidence.

## ENSURING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PREPAREDNESS

The TDC is committed to crisis communications preparedness:

- Crisis communications protocol review and training annually (and integrate communications protocols into onboarding for key staff)
- Update the TDC's crisis communications plan biannually
- Execute a Hurricane Preparedness Workshop for TDC stakeholders annually (in May)
- Meet with the Emergency Management PIO team regularly to align
- Best practice of meeting/tour the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) annually
- Attend the county PIO Symposium annually
- Continue encouraging stakeholders to sign up for Tourism Advisory alerts [here](#)
- TDC Spokesperson media training, including mock interviews and Q&A
- Update all necessary phone and email lists, and distribute lists to key parties
- Encourage tourism stakeholders and the community overall to sign up for county alerts via Alert!Monroe and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office mobile app
- Consider adding a generator/back-up battery to two TDC offices to support power during a storm
- Explore switching to a satellite-based internet service provider in two TDC offices to increase the likelihood of reliable internet during/after storms so TDC can communicate with stakeholders
- Consider adding NOAA Radio to ensure TDC receives rapid storm shifts in real time (encourage stakeholders to do the same)
- Post-crisis debriefs to document learnings and update actions as needed

# SCENARIO PLANNING: DEFINING A CRISIS

## DETERMINING LEVELS OF RESPONSE: ISSUE, EMERGENCY OR CRISIS

To guide the effective allocation of resources and communication efforts, it is essential to distinguish between an issue, an emergency, and a crisis. Understanding the nature and scale of each allows for appropriate response strategies. There are different Alert Levels per issue, emergency and crisis, as outlined on the next slide.

Category	Definition	Examples/Triggers/Indicators	Response Approach	Escalation Potential
<b>Issue</b>	A disagreement, concern, or emerging topic with potential to affect reputation, perception, stakeholder or visitor confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public concern over proposed policy changes or political views impacting tourism</li> <li>- Dissatisfaction that may affect public perception or stakeholder trust</li> <li>- Rumors or misinformation spreading on social media</li> </ul>	Monitor, manage proactively, communicate carefully	May escalate if ignored or poorly handled. Issues can be active (currently in the public or organizational spotlight) or dormant (lingering concerns that may resurface)
<b>Emergency</b>	A sudden, time-sensitive incident requiring immediate operational response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major accidents</li> <li>- Severe weather, fires</li> <li>- Utility failure</li> <li>- Localized public safety threats</li> <li>- Medical emergencies at events</li> </ul>	Activate emergency response plan, inform key stakeholders	Can escalate into a crisis based on scope, harm, or media interest
<b>Crisis</b>	A major event causing widespread disruption, a threat to life, property and the environment. Crises attract intense public, media, and stakeholder attention and may lead to operational disruption, reputation damage, or long-term consequences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mass casualty event</li> <li>- Natural disaster</li> <li>- Major environmental hazard</li> <li>- Large-scale cybersecurity breach</li> <li>- National media coverage</li> <li>- Pandemic w/o vaccine</li> </ul>	Full crisis management team activation, central coordination, continuous updates	Highest level - full mobilization required

# SCENARIO PLANNING: ALERT LEVELS

Whether dealing with an issue, an emergency, or a perceived or verified crisis, each situation may dissipate or escalate as it unfolds. Communication will vary based on the unique or unexpected circumstances.

## **ALERT LEVEL 1 - LOW NO INTEREST TO PUBLIC, LITTLE THREAT TO TOURISM BRAND**

- Infrastructure remediation or maintenance
- Short-term closure (road or attraction)
- Short-staffed
- Social complaints and poor reviews
- Minor lodging housekeeping/room complaints
- Employee / group misconduct

**Likely, no additional comms support needed, yet monitor for progression.**

## **ALERT LEVEL 2 - MEDIUM POSSIBLE PUBLIC INTEREST, POSSIBLE THREAT TO TOURISM BRAND**

- Environmental impact i.e. Sargassum (*alert level depends on volume, term*)
- Legal issues directed toward tourism industry
- Legal investigation
- Data breach

**Some minor comms and social support may be needed at this level.**

## **ALERT LEVEL 3 - HIGH PUBLIC INTEREST, INVOLVES DESTINATION, POTENTIAL FOR LASTING IMPACT TO TOURISM BRAND**

- Infrastructure failure i.e. extended road closure
- Shark attack, serious injury, death
- Tropical Storm that dissipates or fire contained
- Data breach
- Environmental impact i.e. Sargassum or red tide (*alert level depends on volume, term*)
- Political views or policies shaping tourist visits

**Reactive and some proactive comms and social support will be needed at this level.**

## **ALERT LEVEL 4 - VERY HIGH NATIONAL AWARENESS ISSUE, IMPACT TO TOURISM BRAND**

- Natural disasters, category 1-5 hurricanes, fire that spreads, evacuations
- Public health crisis causing shutdowns
- Active assailant/mass shooting, bombing
- Hazardous waste spill, environmental accident
- NPS-wide issue/conflict
- CEO/executive scandal

**Proactive comms and social support will be needed at this level.**

# SCENARIO PLANNING: KEY AUDIENCES

## INTERNAL + EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

While each issue, emergency and crisis will require different communication per audience, it's important to have key audiences defined and detailed distribution lists ready. All will gain reassurance and confidence from a well-planned and authoritative response.

### INTERNAL

- TDC Staff + Contractors
- TDC Stakeholders i.e., lodging, restaurants, bars, attractions, tours, attractions, campgrounds & RV parks
- Emergency Management, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), County Public Information Offices (PIO)
- Emergency services, i.e. National Weather Service (NWS), law enforcement, fire department.
- Transportation partners

### EXTERNAL

- Current visitors in county staying at lodges, rentals, campgrounds or dining at restaurants, visiting attractions or on a tour
- Future visitors if destination is impacted for future stays
- Select media outlets - local, regional, national, trade
- Domestic and international travel agents, tour operators
- Domestic and international event, meeting and incentive planners
- Government agencies i.e., FEMA, CDC
- Select social media users (owned channels); broader in the recovery phase

**Primary Contact List for Comms Listed on Next Page. Links to Complete Contact Lists Below.**

To [request](#) TDC Staff Contact List  
[Link to](#) Emergency Management [Joint Information Center](#)

# SCENARIO PLANNING: KEY CONTACTS

## INTERNAL TDC TEAM - KEY COMMS CONTACTS, VFK ORG CHART, CLICK [HERE](#).

### RESPONSIBILITIES LISTED BELOW ONLY RELATED TO CRISIS COMMS

Kara Franker, President & CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-TDC lead and primary decision-maker</li> <li>-Coordinates directly with EM director</li> <li>-Final comms approval</li> <li>-May serve as a spokesperson</li> <li>-Lead for all HR or legal needs</li> </ul>
Heidi Barfels, Sr. Vice President of Marketing & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Oversees marketing, PR comms and agency partners</li> <li>-Gives comms approval</li> <li>-Leads internal TDC team crisis efforts for website, advisory and social media updates</li> <li>-Attends all county crisis comms update meetings</li> </ul>
Jeanne Quinn, Sr. Vice President, Partnerships & Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ensure website comms activated for interim website and new website (internal team able to add alerts and hurricane page + link to JIC page); Build TDC version of JIC pg for future site.</li> </ul>
JoNell Modys, Sr. Director Community Engagement & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads internal TDC crisis communications</li> <li>-Drafts tourism advisories for natural disasters and other emergencies; drafts releases, other comms as needed</li> <li>-Attends all county crisis comms update meetings</li> <li>-Ensures messaging aligns with MCEM</li> </ul>
Sherene Irani, Sr. Director of Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leads advertising efforts and directs marketing agency partner</li> <li>- Ensures paid media is turned off once decision is made by leadership</li> </ul>
Mary Haban, Director of Public Relations Allison Morgan, Director of Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Serves as internal TDC back-up to JoNell for drafting tourism advisories or other comms during a crisis</li> <li>-Leads and/or supports media relations needs during a crisis or recovery phase (as approved by MCEM) with agency partner TURNER.</li> </ul>
Chad Newman, Dir. of Florida Keys News Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In-destination media support as needed</li> <li>-Real time content support to show open, recovery</li> </ul>
Jules Powers, Content Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Social channel support with Heidi and OMG.</li> <li>-Real time content support.</li> </ul>

## TDC AGENCY PARTNERS - KEY COMMS CONTACTS

Christine Turner, President, TURNER PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads crisis communications strategy for key situations</li> </ul>
Naureen Kazi, Sr. Vice President, TURNER PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads crisis communications for key situations</li> <li>-Supports media relations needs</li> </ul>
Malcolm Griffiths, Sr. Vice President, TURNER PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads crisis communications for key situations</li> <li>-Leads media relations needs for crisis situations</li> </ul>
Stephanie Salama, Sr. Director, TURNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads crisis communications for key situations</li> <li>-Supports media relations and monitoring/reporting</li> </ul>
Emma Abbott, VP Digital & Social Media, TURNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leads digital monitoring; will lead if social media messaging support is needed</li> </ul>
Jacqui Hartnett, President, Starmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Works with Heidi and Sherene to turn on/off ad campaigns; strategic campaign shifts as needed</li> </ul>
Aimee Arnoldi, Account Director, MMGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Working with Jeanne on new website development and Klaviyo platform</li> <li>-May need to support posting content to current site</li> </ul>
Jenny Lorenz, CEO, Overseas Media Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Manages webcams, resource for TDC, media</li> <li>-Works with Heidi/Jules on approved social messaging</li> </ul>

# SCENARIO PLANNING: KEY CONTACTS

Important [Monroe County Emergency Management](#), [Emergency Operations Center](#) (EOC), county contacts below:

<b>MONROE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT - KEY CONTACTS</b> <a href="#">LINK TO LIST ON WEBSITE</a>
Cory Schwisow, Director, Monroe County Emergency Management
Kristen Livengood, PIO, Monroe County
Chip Kasper, Meteorologist in Charge, National Weather Service
Jon Rizzo, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service
National Weather Service Key West, <a href="#">link to staff</a>
Michael Brennan, Director, National Hurricane Center, Miami
Public Affairs, National Hurricane Center
Rene Luis "RL" Colina, Fire Rescue Deputy Chief, ( <a href="#">interview link</a> , Keys Talk)
Rick Ramsay, Sheriff (Chief law enforcement officer, elected)
Adam Linhardt, PIO Sheriff's Office
Sean T. Brandenburg, Police Chief, Key West Police Department
Alyson Crean, PIO Key West Police Department & City of Key West
Joshua Empen, Captain, Coast Guard Sector Key West
Jodi Weinhofer, President and CEO, Lodging Assoc. of FL Keys & Key West
Lynne Hernandez, Monroe Chapter FL Restaurant & Lodging Association
Liam Rodriguez, PIO, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
<b>MUNICIPALITIES - <a href="#">CITY OF KEY WEST</a>, <a href="#">CITY OF MARATHON</a>, <a href="#">KEY COLONY BEACH</a>, <a href="#">CITY OF LAYTON</a>, <a href="#">ISLAMORADA</a></b>
Jim Scholl, Mayor, Board of County Commissioners
Danise DeeDee Henriquez, Mayor of Key West
Brian Barroso, Key West City Manager
Lynn Landry, Mayor, City of Marathon
<b>Carlos Garcia</b> , PIO, <b>City of Marathon</b>
George Garrett, City Manager, City of Marathon
Freddie Foster, Mayor, Key Colony Beach
John Bartus, City Administrator, Key Colony Beach
Mimi Young, City Clerk, City of Layton
Bruce Halle, Mayor, City of Layton
Ron Saunders, Village Manager, Islamorada
Stefanie Peel, Assistant to Village Manager, Islamorada
Sharon Mahoney, Mayor, Islamorada
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HEATH CONTACTS</b>
Dr. Taweb Beysolow, Medical Director, Health Department
Jennifer Leflar, PIO, Health Department

# COUNTY & TDC ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## ROLE OF MONROE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IF SITUATION THREATENS RESIDENT / VISITOR SAFETY

While Monroe County Emergency Management and the TDC have the same goals when dealing with crises, it's important to distinguish the roles & responsibilities of each:

[Monroe County Emergency Management](#) is responsible for preparing the Florida Keys to handle any event that may threaten the safety of residents and visitors or impact property and infrastructure. As the lead agency during emergencies, Monroe County Emergency Management coordinates efforts among all municipalities, private sector partners, and state and federal agencies. The department develops and implements comprehensive emergency plans that strengthen the county's ability to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

### Emergency Operations and Communication Functions

Oversees strategic emergency coordination through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and communication efforts via the Public Information Office (PIO) and Joint Information Center (JIC).

### [Public Information Office \(PIO\)](#)

The PIO is responsible for providing accurate and timely information to the public and media about Monroe County actions, policies, and public meetings of the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the County's 25 departments. The PIO provides the primary information for [Monroe County Emergency Management](#) and [Monroe County Fire Rescue](#).

### [Emergency Operations Center \(EOC\)](#)

The EOC serves as a central command and control facility for managing emergency response and recovery operations (directing resources, coordinating agencies, and overseeing critical operations across the county). Located at 7280 Overseas Highway, Marathon, FL 33050 (shelter safe room, can protect up to 150 people for 96 hours, withstand 220 mph winds).

Operates under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to ensure consistency and coordination among responding agencies.

- Collaborates closely with the National Weather Service (NWS) Key West, National Hurricane Center (NHC) Miami, Sheriff's 911 Call Center, Fire Rescue Administration, local municipalities, private partners, and state and federal agencies to ensure streamlined and effective responses.

### [Joint Information Center \(JIC\)](#)

The JIC is the public communications hub of the EOC, responsible for delivering timely, accurate, and coordinated information to the public and media during emergency events.

Gathers and disseminates information from multiple sources, including county departments, municipalities, and community partners.

Public Information Officers (PIOs) from involved agencies staff the JIC to ensure multi-agency and multi-jurisdiction coordination of public messaging.

Ensures the public receives reliable updates on safety measures, evacuation notices, emergency orders, and recovery efforts.

#### Resources

[About Emergency Management Department](#)  
[National Weather Service Key West](#)  
[National Hurricane Center](#)  
[Evacuation Information and Shelter List](#)  
[Emergency Orders & Declarations](#)  
[Hurricane History & Info](#)  
[Alert!Monroe](#)  
[Monroe County Sheriff's Office app](#)

# COUNTY & TDC ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## ROLE OF THE TDC DURING AN EMERGENCY

While **Monroe County Emergency Management** is responsible for emergency response and communication before, during, and after issues, emergencies and crises, such as hurricanes, wildfires, pandemics, and other significant events, the TDC plays a vital supporting role in emergency and crises by supplementing the communications efforts of Emergency Management and the Public Information Office (PIO) with targeted tourism stakeholder communications, particularly focused on visitor safety.

### TDC's Role During Emergencies:

- **Supplemental Communication Support:** The TDC enhances the proactive communication efforts of Monroe County Emergency Management by sharing timely and accurate information with tourism-related businesses (lodging, restaurants, attractions) and selected media outlets. This ensures tourism employees and visitors stay informed with official safety updates.
- **Visitor and Travel Guidance:** During threats such as hurricanes, the TDC provides updates regarding travel conditions and alerts potential visitors when it is unsafe to travel to the Florida Keys. The TDC also supports evacuation efforts by helping communicate necessary information to stakeholders and visitors, promoting safe departures from the area when required.

### How the TDC Supports Emergency Communication:

- **Dedicated Communications Program:** The TDC maintains a specialized program focused on delivering emergency-related information to front line hospitality teams to relay directly to visitors in-destination and those calling for information ahead of a planned visit.
- **Website Updates:** The TDC website includes vital emergency preparedness resources for visitors, such as evacuation guidelines and links to services like the Red Cross "Safe and Well" program.
- **Social Media:** The TDC posts regular updates sharing information from official sources.
- **Emergency Management Hotline: Visitors will be directed to a** dedicated hotline operated by Monroe County that can provide up-to-date emergency information to visitors during a crisis. Phone lines will be transferred to this hotline in the event of office closure.
- **Coordination with Emergency Officials:** All TDC communications are developed in coordination with Monroe County Emergency Management to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- **Consumer and Travel Media Outreach:** The TDC team issues destination status or emergency messaging when appropriate to out-of-market consumer and travel media as well as trade (travel advisor, tour operator) contacts.

While Monroe County Emergency Management leads a primary emergency response and public communication efforts, the TDC plays a critical support role by focusing on the communication needs of visitors and the tourism sector, helping to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in the Florida Keys during emergencies.

Resources  
[Hurricane FAQ - TDC website](#)

# COUNTY & TDC ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## VISUAL OF ALIGNED COMMUNICATIONS ROLES

### MONROE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- If situation threatens resident / visitor safety, MCEM evaluates severity and risk level of the situation with NWS, emergency services, other.
- Coordinates **emergency response** as well as coordinated **communication** with all EOC representatives
- Leads daily briefings, **ensuring timely and accurate information shared with all parties** - emergency services, municipality leaders and PIOs, TDC, etc. Outlined further on page 14.
- Leads **external communication and media briefings**, outlined further on page 15.

### TDC COMMS TEAM

- **TDC execs / comms team** receive regular briefings from Emergency Management; aligns with County PIO on implications and supplemental messaging needed for **tourism staff, stakeholders and visitors**.
- Alerts **agency partners** for communications support and drafts messaging as frequently as necessary with all tourism staff, stakeholders, and select media (all messaging approved in advance of distribution by emergency management and NWS Key West and/or other agencies depending on nature of emergency).
- TDC uses a variety of communications tools including Tourism Advisories emailed and posted for stakeholders, website, social media, monitoring, webcams, media. Outlined on slide 15.

#### TURNER PR

- **Monitors media** activity and **online** sentiment.
- Tracks **coverage**, shares real-time updates and recommendations on **media response**.
- Supports internal TDC crisis comms with **stakeholder & media strategy**, statements, Q&As, etc.
- Leads proactive **media outreach**, supports inbound inquiries. Advises on coordinated messaging.

#### STARMARK

- Advises on **owned channel messaging, brand alignment** across platforms.
- Works with Heidi Barfels and Sherene Irani to **start / stop ad campaigns, partnerships, promotions**, based on crisis impact; **advises on strategic campaign shifts** and targeting in **recovery phase** i.e. thanking first responders, rebuilding or open messaging.

#### MMGY

- **Developing TDC's new website** – go-live Oct 2025. Will include Visitor Safety Information page; internal TDC team will have ability to add website alert banners and emergency updates in real time. Current site can have real-time updates to Current Travel Safety Information page pointed to by red/yellow/green alert home page banners as needed.
- Managing TDC email software for advisory email sends, with copy written by JoNell Modys.

#### OVERSEAS MEDIA GROUP

- Manages county **webcams**, resource for media, recovery comms, TDC internal comms.
- Handles TDC **social channel strategy, monitoring and messaging**.
- Works with Heidi Barfels and Jules Powers on approved crisis comms messaging, sharing NWS trusted source info.

*Every issue, emergency and crisis is vastly different and the response and communication will vary based on the unique or unexpected circumstances that often require deviations from even the most exhaustively detailed crisis management plan.*

*For this communications guide, we have selected three sample crises/emergencies/issues outlining the chain of communication, key audiences, sample questions, messaging and recovery steps.*

Natural Disaster: **HURRICANE** - Crisis, Alert Level 4

Infrastructure Failure: **ROAD CLOSURE** - Emergency, Alert Level 2-4

Environmental Threat: **SARGASSUM** - Emergency, Alert Level 2

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### SITUATION: THERE IS A HURRICANE APPROACHING

#### HOW DOES MONROE COUNTY AND THE TDC LEARN ABOUT A PENDING STORM?

- Typically, the National Weather Service (NWS) in Key West, along with its National Hurricane Center (NHC) division, notifies Monroe County Emergency Management Director, Cory Schwisow, and PIO, Kristen Livengood, [livengood-kristen@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:livengood-kristen@monroecounty-fl.gov),
- Emergency Management/county PIO sends an email to the EOC distribution list, which includes the TDC, emergency services, primary agency and municipality contacts including the county PIOs and schedules 'County Coordinating Calls.'
- Emergency Management Director, Cory Schwisow, contacts TDC President & CEO, Kara Franker.

#### HOW DOES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTINUE TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH COUNTY OFFICIALS?

Emergency Management follows all emergency response protocols for resident and visitor safety through the progression from storm to hurricane to recovery; they also ensure county officials have frequent updates:

- **Daily calls:** 10am and 3 pm (dependent upon progression of storm)
  - NWS gives an update
  - EM Director makes brief statement and calls on each public agency for updates (also includes schools, utilities, coast guard, etc.)
  - Open for questions
  - Announce the next meeting time
- **Email:** County PIO, Kristen Livengood, continues to share info via email to the EOC list.
- **WhatsApp PIO group:** County PIO, Kristen Livengood, creates the group and shares info.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### HOW DOES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SHARE INFORMATION WITH THE PUBLIC DURING AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS?

Emergency Management leads all external communication with residents, the public and the media for situations that threaten resident or visitor safety. Updates and emergency alerts are shared in many ways:

Emergency Updates posted on the [Joint Information Center website page](#).

**Emergency Alerts:** Monroe County Emergency Management [updates news and media sources](#) with the latest information, as well as their website ([www.monroecountyem.com/turkeypoint](http://www.monroecountyem.com/turkeypoint)) and social media accounts (Facebook: [www.facebook.com/monroecountyem](http://www.facebook.com/monroecountyem) and X: <https://x.com/monroecounty>).

#### Other Information Channels:

- Monroe County BOCC updates on the Nextdoor application, and people can sign up for emergency text/email/call alerts at [www.monroecountyem.com/alertmonroe](http://www.monroecountyem.com/alertmonroe).
- FM Radio: Primary emergency alert system stations include WFKZ 103.1, WEOW 92.7 and WWUS 104.1.

#### Responsibilities of the Public Information Office (as noted on website)

- Writes and distributes news releases.
- Maintains the County's official social media communications across all platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, NextDoor, and Flickr.
- Creates content and maintains Monroe County websites.
- Interacts with members of the media and public and responds to questions from County residents.
- Arranges press conferences, media briefings, and public meetings.
- Works with state and federal government entities to ensure County residents receive information about programs, grants, and opportunities.
- Creates the [State of the County Annual Report](#).

#### Monroe County Official Social Media Sites

- [Monroe County BOCC Facebook](#)
- [Monroe County Fire Rescue Facebook](#)
- [Monroe County's Key West International Airport Facebook](#)
- [Monroe County Guardian ad Litem Facebook](#)
- [X @Monroe County](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Flickr](#)
- [County News Releases](#)
- [Fire Rescue News Releases](#)
- [Emergency Management News Releases](#)

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### HOW DOES THE TDC SUPPORT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND ENSURE TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS AND VISITORS RECEIVE INFORMATION?

1. TDC CEO, Kara Franker, **shares initial info with staff and agency partners to prepare**, align resources for comms duties. Reminds team that TDC and partners are not the designated spokespersons for hurricanes and that they should direct all media inquiries to Heidi Barfels or TURNER PR.
2. TDC team join **daily EOC briefings** to identify important facts to share with stakeholders and staff (and media if/when needed). Frequency of briefings and info. sharing shifts as storm progresses.
3. TDC/agency partners **coordinate messaging to ensure timely and accurate flow of information to tourism stakeholders and visitors/public** via the following channels:
  1. **Tourism Advisories:** TDC internal crisis comms lead, JoNell Modys, drafts **Tourism Advisories emails which serve to prepare tourism stakeholders**; info from EM/NWS regarding storm level, forecast, protection orders, closures, shelter in place or evacuation, etc. (*Kara approves and send to Cory Schwisow and Chip Kasper for approval. Allison Morgan serves as back-up to JoNell Modys internally*). Tourism Advisories are shared via email with anyone who [signs up for industry communications](#) on the [Partner Resources page](#) of the TDC website. Tourism Advisory emails will also be posted to the [Current Travel Safety Information page](#) of the [TDC website](#).
  2. **Media and Social Monitoring:** TURNER sets up **media monitoring**, and TDC manages **social media monitoring**; reporting shared with TDC and agency partners (frequency based on situation). Look for misinformation that may impact visitors (ensure people use reliable sources). Measurement practices adhere to Barcelona Principles.
  3. **Social Media:** TDC will use social media to communicate with other PIOs to share and gather information.
  4. **Webcams:** OMG ensures all [webcams](#) are working as TDC, media, and public use as a resource.
  5. **TDC website:** working with JoNell Modys, Jeanne Quinn and Olivia Newbold will make real-time updates to existing Current Travel Safety Information page pointed to by red/yellow/green alert homepage banners as needed. The Travel Safety Information page includes links to official sources including [Monroe County JIC](#) and encourages the community to sign up for updates from Alert!Monroe and the MCSO's mobile app. When new TDC website goes live in October 2025, it will include the same information, stakeholders will be advised, and existing site URLs will redirect to the new site.
  6. **Internal TDC Text Group:** TDC creating a small group text in case Wi-Fi takes out internet – with approval, will include TDC team, crisis comms, Lodging Association, Chamber partners and TDC board. More information to come.
  7. **Media:** Monroe County PIO, Kristen Livengood, takes the lead with EOC officials on **all Keys and Miami-based media** updates before/during/after storms. **TDC will supplement** these efforts when there's important information that needs to be shared with current and future visitors via travel/lifestyle/news media. Messaging may be about safety warnings or closures or could be about openings and flights during the recovery phase to support tourism. Agency partner TURNER will work with Heidi Barfels, JoNell Modys, Allison Morgan and Mary Haban on messaging strategy, approvals and targeted distribution/media response.
  8. **WhatsApp:** TDC will use WhatsApp (set up by Kristen Livengood, County PIO) to communicate with other PIOs to share and gather information

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### COMMS TEAM WORKSHEET QUESTIONS

What is the **confirmed stage** and what are the confirmed **facts** of the **impending storm** from reliable sources (NWS/NHC)?

- **Tropical Depression** - cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less; usually smaller than tropical storms and hurricanes, with a diameter of 100-300 miles.
- **Tropical Storm Watch** - tropical storm conditions possible within 48 hours
- **Tropical Storm** - tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 39-73 mph or higher; more organized than tropical depressions and are given names.
- **Hurricane Watch** - hurricane conditions possible within 48 hours
- **Hurricane** - tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher; categorized by the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, which measures the wind speed in miles per hour (shelter in place and evacuation order vary by storm based on storm's intensity and potential impacts - EM Department Executive committee decides evacuation timing:
  - Category 1:** Winds of 74–95 mph
  - Category 2:** Winds of 96–110 mph
  - Category 3:** Winds of 111–130 mph
  - Category 4:** Winds of 131–155 mph
  - Category 5:** Winds of 157 mph or higher

What is the path and timeline for **potential impact to Monroe County and which municipalities** are forecasted to have more impact?

Confirm **chain and frequency of communication** from MCEM to TDC/EOC list i.e. daily briefing schedule, PIO updates, etc.

What are the **MCEM response actions** taking place now?

Are all **media inquiries** going to Kristen Livengood, PIO, or someone else at MCEM or NWS?

Are there any **protective orders** being shared with residents and visitors? What important **safety information/action steps** should the TDC supplement so **tourism stakeholders and visitors** can prepare? Public safety advisories?

- Early stage, i.e., stay inside/out of water/off boats, avoid windows, get water/supplies, get [NWS updates here](#)
- Should visitors start looking for flights before roads or airports are closed?
- Are there any closures, i.e., roads, gas stations, grocery stores, attractions?
- Should we share links to any resources? i.e., [emergency orders and declarations](#), [list of shelters](#)
- Planning phased or mandatory evacuations?
- Has a state of emergency been declared (allowing local authorities to take protective action)?

Understand the proximity of storm pathing to the number of stakeholders, residents and visitors who might need to evacuate. Work with county EM/PIO to confirm accurate, timely communications for stakeholder and visitor safety. Do stakeholders or visitors need any type of assistance, i.e., evacuation support, supplies, meals, lodging, relocation?

Has there been **any misinformation** reported by the media or shared via social channels? If so, share reliable sources to mitigate.

Discuss stakeholder and public communications channels and messaging at each stage

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING

- ✓ Employees
- ✓ Tourism stakeholders
- ✓ Current visitors in the county
- ✓ Media
- ✓ Future visitors (if impact for future trips)

★ **Important Note on Messaging for Natural Disasters / Hurricanes:** The messaging examples in this document are intended as guidance only and will vary significantly based on the unique and unpredictable nature of each storm. As a system evolves, from a tropical depression to a tropical storm to a Category 1–5 hurricane, protective actions such as closures, shelter-in-place advisories, or evacuation orders will differ depending on the storm’s severity and projected impact, which includes storm surges and flooding. These protective orders are determined by the Emergency Management Committee. All communications issued before, during and after a storm will be tailored and aligned with Monroe County Emergency Management protocols.

### TDC STAFF (EX: INITIAL COMMS)

TDC team,

Monroe County Emergency Management (MCEM) just informed us of a Tropical Storm Watch for Monroe County which means a Tropical Storm is possible within 48 hours. Our top priority during any natural disaster is protecting human life and our TDC role is to supplement information shared by MCEM to ensure our stakeholders and visitors can get prepared for any necessary actions. We will be attending daily Emergency Operations Center (EOC) briefings and as each new update comes in, and in alignment with the County, we will share a Tourism Advisory via email with tourism stakeholders and will send a text alert (*include if we have text notification system started*). We are updating the alert banner on our website and will add social media and media updates as necessary.

MCEM is forecasting (*insert level, pathing, timing info*), but they have not shared any protective orders at this time. Please stay tuned via [any of these Monroe County sources](#) and [sign up for alerts here](#) if you haven’t already.

Please refer all media inquiries to Heidi Barfels at [heidi@fla-keys.com](mailto:heidi@fla-keys.com) and cc: Christine Turner at [christine@turnerpr.com](mailto:christine@turnerpr.com). They will work with me and/or refer inquiries to MCEM.

If you have any immediate concerns or need assistance during the storm, please let me know. We will share updates as information becomes available (*add any directions on working remotely, or key people working from TDC offices due to power and internet needs, as well as support or leverage for key team members while they redirect attention to the storm*). Thank you for uniting to help us keep our colleagues, tourism partners and visitors safe.

Kara

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING (CONT.)

*Examples only - every situation is different and statements will vary. All advisories and media information are approved in advance by Emergency Management.*

#### TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS (EX: INITIAL COMMS)

Tourism Partners,

We want to make you aware that Monroe County Emergency Management (MCEM) just informed us of a **Tropical Storm Watch for Monroe County**, thus a Tropical Storm is possible within 48 hours. Our top priority during any natural disaster is protecting human life and our TDC role is to supplement information shared by MCEM to ensure that you, our tourism partners, and your guests/county visitors, can get prepared for any necessary actions.

We will be attending daily Emergency Operations Center (EOC) / National Weather Service (NWS) briefings and as appropriate, and in alignment with the county, we will send Tourism Advisory emails to anyone who [signs up for our industry communications](#) on the [Partner Resources page](#) of the TDC website. We will update the [Current Travel Safety Information page](#) of the TDC website and as appropriate, activate [home page](#) alert banners that point to that page. Communication updates will also be published on social media and sent to the media as necessary.

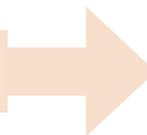
MCEM has disclosed ([insert any pertinent updates about supplies, closures, etc if any](#)), but has not shared any protective orders at this time. Please stay tuned via [any of these Monroe County sources](#) and [sign up for alerts here](#) if you haven't already. As you continue to follow updates, please only rely on reliable sources of information from MCEM, NWS and National Hurricane Center (NHC).

Please direct any media inquiries to Kristen Livengood, PIO, Monroe County, [livengood-kristen@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:livengood-kristen@monroecounty-fl.gov).

Thank you for remaining diligent for your teams and guests/visitors.

Kara

ADVISORY EXAMPLES ON NEXT PAGE...



# LEVEL FOUR

# CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

## AUDIENCE & MESSAGING (CONT.) ADVISORIES AT VARIOUS STAGES OF STORM

**1 KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY**

This advisory is based on information and instructions from the National Hurricane Center, Florida Keys National Weather Service Office and Monroe County Emergency Management.

**Compiled and transmitted by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council**

Sept. 24, 2022 • 12:00 p.m.

### Keys Officials Watch, Discuss Tropical Storm Ian



Official National Hurricane Center five-day tracking map graphic, issued at 11 a.m. (ET) Saturday, Sept. 24, showing the forecast error track cone for Tropical Storm Ian.

Monroe County Emergency Management staged another coordinating preparation Zoom for Tropical Storm Ian Saturday.

Due to the slightly slower track of the storm, no decisions have been made on any possible visitor or resident evacuations, sheltering or other protective actions. Those decisions may be announced Saturday afternoon, according to Shannon Weiner, the county's emergency management director.

"It is still a little too early to discuss the magnitude of specific impacts to the Florida Keys at this time," said Jon Rizzo, the warning coordination meteorologist for the Florida Keys National Weather Service office. "However, this information is expected to become somewhat clearer beginning later today."

At 11 a.m. Saturday, the center of the tropical storm was located about 815 miles southeast of Key West with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph. It was moving west at 15 mph. The storm is expected to turn to the northwest late Saturday night and then turn to the north.

Rizzo reported that Ian is forecast to intensify to hurricane strength by Sunday night.

Ian is currently forecast to grow to major hurricane (category 3) strength while moving northward toward the southeast Gulf of Mexico near the latitude of the Florida Keys.

Tropical storm-force winds could arrive in some regions of the Keys as early as Monday evening. Therefore, any preparations should be complete by Monday afternoon. There is the potential for hurricane-force winds for some portions of the Lower Keys and Key West, with the most likely time frame for the roughest weather midday Tuesday through Tuesday night.

Airports and businesses remain open. Monroe County government offices are to be open Monday, with the exception of the County Clerk's office. Monroe County schools have not made decisions regarding school or office closings.

Another tourism advisory is expected to be transmitted Saturday afternoon.



#### Information Resources:

National Hurricane Center

Florida Keys National Weather Service

Monroe County Emergency Management

Monroe County Sheriff's Office

Florida Division of Emergency Management

**2 KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY**

This advisory is based on information and instructions from the National Hurricane Center, Florida Keys National Weather Service Office and Monroe County Emergency Management.

**Compiled and transmitted by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council**

Sept. 26, 2022 • 8:15 a.m.

### Ian Now a Hurricane; Tropical Storm Warning Up for Lower Keys, Key West



Official National Hurricane Center three-day tracking map graphic, issued at 8 a.m. (ET) Monday, Sept. 26, showing the forecast error track cone for Tropical Storm Ian.

The National Hurricane Center Monday morning upgraded Ian to hurricane status and has issued a tropical storm warning for a portion of the Florida Keys, west of the Seven Mile Bridges to the Dry Tortugas including Key West.

A tropical storm warning means that tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of at least 39 mph, but not greater than 73 mph) are expected somewhere within the warning area within 36 hours. In this case, tropical storm conditions are anticipated to begin in the Lower Keys and Key West early Tuesday afternoon.

The center also issued a storm surge watch for all of the Florida Keys, identifying a possibility of flooding from rising water moving inland from the coastline during the next 48 hours.

At 7 a.m. Monday, the center of Hurricane Ian was about 425 miles southwest of Key West. It was moving to the northwest at 14 mph with 75 mph sustained winds.

The NHC expects rapid intensification Monday and forecasts that Ian will be a major hurricane by the time it crosses over the western tip of Cuba early Tuesday.

The contiguous Florida Keys remain out of Ian's forecast error track cone, but Keys residents and visitors should remain vigilant, as well as preparing for gusty winds, heavy rainfall and potential coastal flooding. Any preparations should be completed by Monday evening.

That said, the chances for sustained hurricane winds (at least 74 mph) are below 5 percent in the Lower Keys and Key West, and are about 1 percent in the Upper and Middle Keys, according to Jon Rizzo, the warning coordination meteorologist for the Florida Keys National Weather Service office.

Monroe County Emergency Management is likely to announce several protective actions for the Lower Keys and Key West Monday morning.

Another Ian advisory is to be issued later Monday morning.

**4 KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY**

This advisory is based on information and instructions from the National Hurricane Center, Florida Keys National Weather Service Office and Monroe County Emergency Management.

**Compiled and transmitted by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council**

Sept. 28, 2022 • 8:20 a.m.

### Key West Airport Closed Wednesday



Official National Hurricane Center three-day tracking map graphic, issued at 8 a.m. (ET) Wednesday, Sept. 28, showing the forecast error track cone for Hurricane Ian.

Wednesday morning, Monroe County Airports Director Richard Strickland reported that **Key West International Airport** is temporarily closed due to surge impacts from Hurricane Ian.

Strickland said he would have an update later Wednesday regarding a timeframe for reopening.

Meanwhile, among road impacts, Islamorada Fire Chief Terry Abel reported that debris and seaweed washed up on the Florida Keys Overseas Highway (US1) near mile marker 74. Law enforcement officials are alternating traffic flow until Islamorada Public

**3 KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY**

This advisory is based on information and instructions from the National Hurricane Center, Florida Keys National Weather Service Office and Monroe County Emergency Management.

**Compiled and transmitted by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council**

Sept. 28, 2022 • 12:25 p.m.

### Officials: Be Vigilant for Gulfside/Bayside Storm Surge



Official National Hurricane Center three-day tracking map graphic, issued at 11 a.m. (ET) Wednesday, Sept. 28, showing the forecast error track cone for Hurricane Ian.

Although Hurricane Ian is moving away from the Florida Keys, warnings and watches continue and officials are especially concerned Wednesday about the potential for the imminent onset of gulfside/bayside storm surge in the Lower Keys and Key West.

Storm surge in the Lower Keys and Key West may be as high as 4 feet above normal high tide levels, according to Jon Rizzo, the warning coordination meteorologist for the Florida Keys National Weather Service office.

Peak storm surge levels in the Lower Keys and Key West will likely occur from around noon through mid-afternoon, he added. Meanwhile, a storm surge watch remains in effect from Marathon through Ocean Reef. Storm surge flooding 1 to 3 feet above normal high tides is possible in this region, Rizzo said.

The highest storm surge for the gulfside/bayside of the Middle Keys is expected Wednesday during the afternoon hours, with storm surge on the bayside of the Upper Keys gradually peaking Thursday through Friday.

A tropical storm warning remains for all the contiguous Florida Keys and surrounding waters.

Impacts with street flooding and downed trees and power lines are prevalent throughout the Lower Keys and Key West.

Keys Energy, the region's utility, began Wednesday with about 10,000 of 30,000 customers without power. By noon, the outage number had been reduced to about 3,000 and crews are continuing efforts to restore power. The Florida Keys Electric Cooperative had only a few outages and is providing mutual aid to Keys Energy.

Keys Energy officials report that numerous power lines are down and warn of danger, especially when walking through flooded areas.

"Avoid touching any power lines that are down or walking in flooded areas with lines on the ground," said Julio Tornado, director of communications. "Consider them to be energized."

Winds are expected to decrease throughout the day today, but scattered squalls may briefly produce wind gusts of 40 to 50 mph today.

**5 KEYS TOURISM ADVISORY**

This advisory is based on information and instructions from the National Hurricane Center, Florida Keys National Weather Service Office and Monroe County Emergency Management.

**Compiled and transmitted by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council**

Sept. 27, 2022 • 5:30 p.m.

### Severe Weather From Ian Impacting Keys; Tropical Storm Warning Up for the Upper Keys



Official National Hurricane Center three-day tracking map graphic, issued at 5 p.m. (ET) Tuesday, Sept. 27, showing the forecast error track cone for Hurricane Ian.

Although the hurricane forecast track cone from Major Hurricane Ian remains clear of the contiguous Florida Keys, severe weather including tropical storm-force winds, heavy rain

and some storm surge has begun impacting regions of the island chain.

A tropical storm warning is in effect for the Channel 5 Bridge through Key West and adjacent waters. At 5 p.m. Tuesday, the National Hurricane Center included the Upper

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING (CONT.)

*Examples only, every situation is different, statements will vary. All advisories and media information approved in advance by Emergency Management, will not differ by outlet.*

#### TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS (EX: ENCOURAGE DEPARTURE)

Tourism Partners,

As Hurricane **<Tk hurricane name>** approaches, safety is our top priority. Visitors are strongly encouraged to review their travel plans and consider departing the Florida Keys & Key West. Please communicate with your guests immediately to ensure this important information is being spread. Visitors should immediately contact airline providers to book earlier flights or explore options for staying in unaffected areas of Florida. The Overseas Highway / US Highway 1 may be closed soon. [Link to MCEM information](#). Please also communicate accordingly with guests that may be arriving for check-in in the coming days/week.

#### TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS (EX: MANDATORY DEPARTURE FOR VISITORS)

Tourism Partners,

A mandatory evacuation is in effect for all visitors and non-residents in the Florida Keys & Key West owing to Hurricane **<TK hurricane name>**. This evacuation order must be completed by **<TK Time>** on **<TK Date>**. Please communicate with your guests immediately to ensure they arrange flights as soon as possible or make driving arrangements for staying in unaffected areas of Florida. Be sure they get on the road before there are closures, remind them to have a full tank of gas and emergency supplies for their journeys. While this disrupts vacations, safety is paramount. [Link to MCEM information](#). Please also communicate accordingly with guests that are arriving for check-in in the coming days/week.

#### MEDIA STATEMENT (EX: EARLY STAGE)

Monroe County Emergency Management (MCEM) is closely monitoring Hurricane **<TK hurricane name>**, alongside the National Weather Service (NWS) and National Hurricane Center (NHC). All lodging, restaurants and businesses are open and operational at this time throughout the Florida Keys & Key West. We are actively coordinating with MCEM and NWS and following all guidance to ensure visitor safety. Please ensure you are using reliable sources when reporting, follow [Monroe County Emergency Management](#) and the [National Weather Service Key West](#) for updates.

#### MEDIA ALERT (EX: MANDATORY DEPARTURE)

As Hurricane **<TK hurricane name>** approaches, Monroe County Emergency Management (MCEM) has issued a mandatory evacuation for all visitors and non-residents in the Florida Keys & Key West. MCEM continues to work closely with the National Weather Service and National Hurricane Center as the safety of residents and visitors is our top priority. Please help us share [this evacuation order](#) via your media outlet and social media channels. Thank you for continuing to use reliable sources when reporting and follow [Monroe County Emergency Management](#) and the [National Weather Service Key West](#) for continued updates.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### MEDIA RELATIONS TIPS

Working with media during a crisis is challenging but important to successfully manage the public perception of the crisis. While journalists are identified as one of TDC's "audiences", they are also a conduit to providing important information to our *other* audiences; thus, we must shape and control our key messages.

Please note that the designated spokesperson before and during (and sometimes right after) a hurricane is not a TDC representative – it is the designated emergency response representative (MCEM director or PIO, NWS or NHC). While TDC may be sharing information with the media throughout the storm cycle, emergency management and meteorology experts need to serve as spokespersons. A TDC executive might be interviewed in the recovery phase when the focus is on bringing visitors back to the destination (approved TDC spokesperson: Kara Franker, president & CEO).

#### SPOKESPERSON TIPS:

##### Execute Your Recovery Plan

- Execute your crisis communications recovery plan as soon as emergency response officials give the green light. This is important so you have the information needed for a safe return to visitors (recovery plan recommends sales team immediately supports execs and comms team by calling upon tourism stakeholders to verify conditions, openings, etc.)

##### Stick to Your Lane

- Only speak to tourism-related topics — hotels, restaurants and attractions are open and accessible.
- For storm-related phases, protective actions, or emergency response, defer to MCEM/NWS: *"For official updates on storm shifts and emergency response, please contact <TK contact name> at MCEM."* (Remind journalist to use reliable sources from either MCEM or NWS)

##### Prioritize Clarity and Accuracy

- Always verify information before sharing with the most recent facts — if you're not 100% sure, say so and offer to follow up.
- Avoid speculation or exaggeration. If you don't know, say: *"That's being assessed now — we'll provide updates as soon as we have them."*

##### Be Calm, Confident, and Compassionate

- Your tone matters. Be professional but human — show empathy for residents, visitors, and workers.
- Example: *"We understand travelers have questions — our job is to give them the clearest, most helpful information possible."*

##### Use Talking Points

- Work from pre-approved, consistent messages to avoid going off-script (messaging you've discussed using consistently across platforms).
- Have a short, updated list of facts with you — open/closed businesses, hotel capacity, roads, etc.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### MEDIA RELATIONS TIPS (CONT.)

#### SPOKESPERSON TIPS (CONT).

##### Anticipate Questions

- Be ready to answer: “Is it safe to visit?”, “What’s open now?”, “Are hotels operating?”, “How are residents impacted?”, “What’s being done to clean up?”
- Use real, vetted data and pivot back to facts and positivity.
- If on camera, work with PR team in advance on responses to any sensitive situations about this particular storm: “Why weren’t evacuation orders called earlier?,” “Do you feel emergency services did a good job when there were <TK number> of deaths?,” “Why are you inviting travelers back when some areas still need to be cleaned up?”

##### Know the Journalist and Their Outlet

- Understand the audience they serve (local vs. national, travel vs. news-focused).
- Tailor your message to meet their needs, e.g.:
  - National outlet: broad recovery and reopening message.
  - Travel: specific experiences available.

##### Offer Visuals and Positivity

- Provide photos/videos of recovery, open beaches, clear roads, open hotels, events — but only if safe and accurate. Send the content team to events, beaches, and boats.
- Share good news when possible: “*We’re seeing strong community support and local businesses are open again.*”

##### Avoid Overpromising

- Don't guarantee specific reopening dates unless officially confirmed.
- Use cautious, forward-looking language:  
“*We expect more attractions to reopen in the coming days — we’ll share updates as that happens.*”

##### Stay Accessible and Responsive

- Work with the PR team, journalist has access to you and builds trust.

##### Debrief After Interviews

- Take time after each interaction to note: What you were asked, What went well, What to refine
- Discuss feedback with your PR team so everyone stays aligned.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### RECOVERY PHASE - TDC EXEC OVERVIEW

Recovery timelines will vary based on damage, closures, accessibility, etc. The following pages provide a checklist of considerations for the broader marketing communications team using a three-phased example which assumes Hurricane damage. [This page](#) is an initial checklist/overview for TDC execs.

#### 1: CHECK ON TEAM AND STAKEHOLDERS, ASSESS DAMAGE AND ALIGN WITH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMS

- Check on staff safety and availability; power and internet in homes and TDC offices.
- Debrief with EM officials on storm impact, infrastructure damage/road closures; deaths/injuries/rescues, power outages, etc. Understand impact and decisions that will impact tourism: a five-person team per city determines action steps for rebuilding and later determines when visitors return - Mayor, EM Dir, Sheriff, Fire Chief, City Administrator. Secure info for comms.
- Activate the TDC sales team immediately to call/visit tourism stakeholders, identify if lodges/restaurants/bars open, take notes on damage or needs to share info with TDC execs. Remind lodging stakeholders to share information in **Fla-keys.com/recovery-lodging database** [<add link>](#) about the state of hotel rooms, on-property F&B options and amenities. Database to be used by first responders, utilities, local officials, repair personnel or displaced residents seeking accommodations after a storm or other disaster (not used for visitors).

#### 2: DETERMINE & COORDINATE RECOVERY RESPONSE

- Continue debriefs with EM and share regular updates with tourism stakeholders and agency partners.
- Discuss/agree on coordinated recovery response with EM/PIO. Ensure accuracy, road and lodging accessibility, etc., before sharing communications with the public.

#### 3: IMPLEMENT RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

- Share the recovery comms plan with tourism stakeholders now that information has been gathered and TDC is aligned with MCEM.
- Coordinate messaging and timing for a unified response across all platforms (if rebuilding, share positive updates about progress; if open, hit misinformation immediately and showcase real-time video to showcase no damage).
- Work with agency partners to execute each marketing communications step (see considerations next three pages across channels i.e., VFK website, media relations (local, regional, national, international), social media, partnerships & events, sales, etc. Activate the content team to secure videos/photos to showcase beautiful, sunny beaches and marinas, images of visitors/fishing/boats, the first cruise ship, first flights, events, hotel and attraction re-openings, street party to thank recovery workers.

#### 4: EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

- TDC/agency partner debrief to evaluate the effectiveness of communications efforts.
- Consider securing stakeholder feedback to ensure communications pathways reach them.
- Assess what worked, what didn't, and what changed. Document lessons learned. Update the plan as necessary.
- Final reporting - media and social media.
- TDC to archive all content and assets developed for future crisis use.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### RECOVERY PHASE MARKETING/COMMS CHECKLIST/CONSIDERATIONS

Timing and actions will vary based on storm damage, locations, accessibility and recovery/reopening timing.

#### ★ PHASE I – ASSESS/ACKNOWLEDGE (RIGHT AFTER LANDFALL, WEEK 1)

##### PR/COMMUNICATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA (LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL)

- Implement hurricane recovery communications to responsibly share up-to-date information with stakeholders and the public i.e., travel advisory, website alerts, social channel copy, etc.
- Monitor media coverage and social conversation. Check for misinformation. Respond to social questions if you have accurate information.
- Assess upcoming activations, new timing/messaging.
- Continue to pause 'regular' earned media efforts. Identify safety, recovery info and thank first responders.
- Gather updates from partners. Secure tourism testimonials that support plans to have as proof points/assets when ready to reach out to the media.
- Capture content on key locations with timestamps.
- Address/reconsider timing for upcoming FAM trips.

##### PR/COMMUNICATIONS (INTERNATIONAL)

- Review the international media coverage audit.
- Assess upcoming activations, new timing/messaging.
- Pause all proactive media pitching.
- Address/reconsider upcoming international media FAM trips.

##### CREATIVE/WEBSITE

- Continue to update website copy to reflect advisory information/alerts.
- Discuss creative for a bridge campaign focused on maintaining and encouraging visitation plans targeting tourists, meeting planners and media for open/accessible areas.
- Develop a map highlighting areas open for tourists.
- Activate [Recovery Lodging website](#) for displaced residents, relief workers and emergency crews and promote site to the community via website links and community communication channels.

##### PAID MEDIA (TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL)

- Pause all paid media.
- Develop media strategy for bridge campaign, i.e. implement targeted paid media for publications mentioning hurricane to balance misleading coverage; redirect messaging to focus on open areas.

##### PARTNERSHIPS & EVENTS

- Assess current partnership activity and update messaging as needed.
- Pause/delay partnership activity that was to go live (social, digital, promotion).
- Assess out-of-market domestic and international upcoming events and identify messaging for pre-event comms, presentations and talking points.

##### TRADE / SALES (INTERNATIONAL)

- Pause proactive sales outreach, scheduled newsletters.
- Monitor trade media coverage.
- Share a proactive hurricane update with international trade, using approved messaging.

##### ★ LEISURE & MICE SALES

- ★ □ Activate the sales team to call and visit hotels/stakeholders so TDC has a damage/opening assessment.
- Contact hotels with meeting space/event spaces, assess damage and target dates for re-opening.
- Review pending site inspections and FAMs, determine feasibility as scheduled or postpone.
- Draft messaging for open, accessible spaces vs. properties with damage that need to be postponed.
- Contact group meeting planners re: status of property/meeting space contracted for upcoming event.
- Contact key leisure partners with status updates on hotels and air access.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### RECOVERY PHASE MARKETING/COMMS CHECKLIST/CONSIDERATIONS

Timing and actions will vary based on storm damage, locations, accessibility and recovery/reopening timing.

#### ★ PHASE II – ADDRESS (BY WEEK 2 AFTER LANDFALL)

##### PR/COMMUNICATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA (LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL)

- Update leisure and MICE messaging, including website travel advisory, reactive and proactive statements/pitches, emails and social channel copy.
- Focus on positive comms about open areas (if open), visuals to offer accurate, reassuring info for media pitching, thank first responders, shoot live video from openings for social, first flights or cruise, respond to social questions.
- Continue to fact-check misinformation.
- Reactivate influencer programs, showcase open areas.
- Remain paused on social content and activations off topic.
- Assess needs for upcoming MICE activities.
- Ensure any links to charities and relief efforts are verified and accurate.
- Assess upcoming coverage due to be published and share updates with the media to advise on affected/non-affected areas included within the coverage.
- Activate [Recovery Lodging website](#) for displaced residents, relief workers and emergency crews and promote site to the community via website links and community communication channels.

##### PAID MEDIA (TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL)

- Finalize paid media plans (digital and traditional). Possibly implement staggered rollout strategy, national and then key markets.
- Possibly resume paid social amplification, leverage real-time imagery of the destination's readiness and ability to welcome tourists (in areas ready for visitors).
- Reassess resuming paid digital campaign – dial up or down on market-by-market basis, assess need to incorporate real-time imagery, combat lasting news coverage with longer-term focus on prospecting, ensuring max awareness of readiness, building on awareness. International may be ready for normal messaging earlier than national due to less hurricane

##### CREATIVE/WEBSITE

- Update website copy to reflect advisories and continue to utilize proper alert banners.
- Develop visuals/bridge creative to showcase real-time status of areas and attractions of interest to travelers – video, social posts, digital banners, print ads.
- Update the map showing areas open for tourists.
- Continue to update website information with the most up-to-date information for partners and travelers.
- Possibly resume any consumer-direct email campaigns that align with the messaging. Consider using it as a channel to inform upcoming and potential future travelers (share with stakeholders for their guest communications). Leverage UGC and real-time imagery.

##### PARTNERSHIPS & EVENTS

- Possibly resume scheduled partnership activity (social, digital, print, podcasts).
- Apply approved messaging to event briefings for scheduled speaking opportunities (open areas, swift recovery based on approved EM facts).

##### TRADE / SALES (INTERNATIONAL)

- Focus on messaging that demonstrates readiness.
- Share post-hurricane update with international trade email showcasing unaffected areas.

##### ★ LEISURE & MICE SALES

- Activate the sales team to call and visit hotels/stakeholders so TDC has a damage/opening assessment.
- Revise messaging and utilize testimonials and photo assets to demonstrate readiness.
- Establish contact with upcoming group leads and offer resources to communicate status to attendees.
- Maintain roadshow and tradeshow schedule and refine messaging accordingly.
- Work through leisure partners to distribute status updates to travel advisors.

# LEVEL FOUR

## CRISIS: NATURAL DISASTER, HURRICANE

### RECOVERY PHASE MARKETING/COMMS CHECKLIST/CONSIDERATIONS

Timing and actions will vary based on storm damage, locations, accessibility and recovery/reopening timing.

#### ★ PHASE III – ACTIVATE (1-4+ WEEKS AFTER LANDFALL)

##### PR/COMMUNICATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA (LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL)

- Pitch positive stories with visuals/testimonials to drive back tourism - openings, flights, cruise, etc.
- Update leisure and MICE messaging, including website travel advisory/banner info, emails and social channel copy. Monitor media coverage and social conversation.
- Activate social content related to bridge messaging.
- Amplify media relations - continue proactive outreach with the latest stats. Fact-check and correct. misinformation. Amplify calendar to drive tourism interest i.e., high season, holiday travel as well as upcoming events.
- Resume media, influencer FAM visits as appropriate.
- Continue planning/programming of leisure and MICE events in key US/international markets.
- Develop an earned-first activation that encourages visitors to plan future travel as tourism fuels local communities.
- Push on planning/messaging for higher profile events i.e. Fantasy Fest, Hemingway Days etc.

##### PAID MEDIA (TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL)

- Execute strategy built in phase I per campaign, channel i.e. continue bridge campaign or consider relaunch regular national campaign(s).

##### CREATIVE/WEBSITE

- Update website to reflect advisories, remove banner alerts, if applicable. Promote bookings, signups, etc.
- Evaluate opportunities to strategically leverage personalized content that tells consumers we're open.
- Continue consumer emails that align with PR and media messaging. Could revert to inspirational content. Leverage UGC and real-time imagery.
- Resume creation, amplification and promotion of PR activations and larger on-Island events.
- Maintain/update [Recovery Lodging website](#) with local property teams and deactivate the site at the appropriate

##### PARTNERSHIPS & EVENTS

- Shift focus away from hurricane messaging where it is possible.
- Communicate readiness by setting all activities live with partners as planned.
- Ensure that briefing docs for upcoming events include messaging that focuses on tourism strength and visitors already back.

##### TRADE / SALES (INTERNATIONAL)

- Amplify international trade efforts i.e., email blast with trade contacts emphasizing readiness/open, organize FAM trips that show we're open for visitors, confirm presence at key trade shows to increase destination visibility among decision makers and run training incentives.
- Assess suitable co-ops and campaign partnerships for trade support and sales driving strategy.

##### LEISURE & MICE SALES

- ★ □ Continue sales calls to tourism stakeholders as needed so execs and comms know what's open.
- Communicate with strategic partners to leverage activations at upcoming tradeshows.
- Synchronize messages with stakeholders attending tradeshow and roadshow events.
- Review contracts for the next 90 days to determine the feasibility of force majeure claims.

# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### SITUATION: ROAD CLOSURE CAUSED BY BRUSH FIRE IMPACTS ACCESS TO THE FLORIDA KEYS & KEY WEST

#### HOW DOES EMERGENCY SERVICES, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OR TDC LEARN ABOUT A ROAD CLOSURE OR INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE?

- Typically, with a road closure or infrastructure failure, such as a bridge collapse, residents or visitors call 911 as they are stranded or injured. 911 calls go directly to the Monroe County Sheriff's office. Because this '25 situation was caused by a brush fire and the fire started in Miami-Dade County, it was Miami-Dade Fire Rescue who learned about the issue (and unfortunately did not notify anyone in Monroe County about the situation). The TDC team heard there were cars backed up and people stranded for up to five hours, thus called the Sheriff's office and County PIO to see if anyone had information.
- Road closures may also be posted by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and listed via [FL511.com](https://www.fl511.com).

#### HOW DO EMERGENCY SERVICES OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH OTHER COUNTY OFFICIALS?

- In the case of road closure or other infrastructure failures, the Monroe County Sheriff's office will make sure key county/municipality leaders are informed via their alert system:
- To receive Monroe County emergency info alerts, [click here](#).
- To download the Monroe County Sheriff's Office app:
  - Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/monroe-county-sheriffs-office/id794698931>
  - Google: [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ocv.monroecountysheriff&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ocv.monroecountysheriff&hl=en_US)

# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### COMMS TEAM WORKSHEET QUESTIONS

- What is causing the road closure that is impacting access to/from Monroe County?
- Did I learn about this through a stakeholder call, thus am I certain that all the right county officials have been notified? (If not, contact the Sheriff and the Fire Department immediately.)
- Are there residents and visitors stranded due to the closure and do we need to ensure emergency services are helping with supplies, fuel, and other needs?
- This road closure was caused by a brush fire. What are the details from emergency services, Sheriff or Fire?
  - What is the current size, spread rate and direction of the brush fire?
  - What percentage of the fire is contained?
  - What impact are the wind conditions and humidity having on the brush fire?
- What is the Sheriff or FDOT and FHP reporting about the brush fire's impact on major access roads to and from the Florida Key & Key West (e.g., U.S. Highway 1, Card Sound Roads)?
  - Are all lanes closed, or is traffic still moving in one direction?
  - Are there any alternate routes open for traffic, not affected by the fire?
  - What impact is the smoke having on visibility for drivers?
  - Has the fire impacted the integrity of roads?
- Are FDOT traffic cams operational and viewable to local responders and media?
- Have there been any motor vehicle accidents and subsequent injuries?
- Are there any communities or critical infrastructure directly threatened by the brush fire and/or smoke haze?
- Is the Key West airport open, providing an alternative access point to Monroe County?
- Any misinformation being reported in the media? Has anyone posted that they are stranded and need help?
- Discuss stakeholder and public communications channels and messaging as needed.

# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### MESSAGING

Examples only, every situation is different, statements will vary. All advisories and media information approved in advance by the appropriate emergency services PIO. Audience does not need to be segmented for this communication.

- ✓ Road Closure Announcement
- ✓ Fire Containment / Road Closure Update
- ✓ Reopening Announcement

### ROAD CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT

Visit Florida Keys/Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC) is advising travelers that intermittent closures and significant delays are now occurring along the 18-Mile Stretch of U.S. 1 due to a brush fire in south Miami-Dade County. U.S. 1 is the main access road into and out of the Florida Keys, and the alternate route, Card Sound Road, is currently closed in both directions. The wildfire—officially named <INSERT NAME> Fire—is being managed by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and the Florida Forest Service and has already burned <INSERT NUMBER> of acres.

Drivers should expect delays in both directions and are urged to avoid the area if possible. A Red Flag Warning has been issued by the National Weather Service due to low humidity and gusty winds, further complicating fire suppression efforts.

For updates, visit the Monroe County Sheriff's Office website at <https://www.keyso.net/> or follow <https://www.instagram.com/mcsoflkeys/> or <https://www.facebook.com/floridakeyssheriff> and monitor [FL511.com](https://www.fl511.com) or the Monroe County Sheriff's Office mobile app for traffic alerts.

### FIRE CONTAINMENT / ROAD CLOSURE UPDATE

Visit Florida Keys/Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC) is providing an update on access into and out of the Florida Keys following the brush fire in south Miami-Dade County. As of today, the northbound lane of the 18-Mile Stretch of U.S. 1 has reopened to traffic, while the southbound lane remains subject to intermittent closures. Card Sound Road continues to be closed in both directions.

The wildfire, known as the <INSERT NAME> Fire, is now <INSERT PERCENTAGE>% contained thanks to efforts led by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and the Florida Forest Service. While fire activity has decreased, travelers should still expect delays and are encouraged to check traffic conditions before departing.

For updates, visit the Monroe County Sheriff's Office website at <https://www.keyso.net/> or follow <https://www.instagram.com/mcsoflkeys/> or <https://www.facebook.com/floridakeyssheriff> and monitor [FL511.com](https://www.fl511.com) or the Monroe County Sheriff's Office mobile app for traffic alerts.

# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### MESSAGING

Examples only, every situation is different, statements will vary. All advisories and media information approved in advance by the appropriate emergency services PIO. Audience does not need to be segmented for this communication.

#### REOPENING ANNOUNCEMENT

Both U.S. 1 and Card Sound Road are now fully open, restoring complete access to the Florida Keys after fire crews successfully contained a large wildfire in south Miami-Dade County. The Florida Forest Service reports the blaze is now 80% contained, with no further spread expected.

The fire, which ignited on <INSERT DATE>, burned <INSERT NUMBER> acres and was tackled by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, the Florida Forest Service, and supporting strike teams. To protect the area and allow fire crews to work safely, road closures were necessary between <INSERT DAY> and <INSERT DAY> along the main travel routes into and out of the Florida Keys & Key West. No damage was reported to homes or businesses, and all local businesses are currently open and operating.

"We are deeply grateful for the dedicated firefighters, emergency responders, and partner agencies who worked tirelessly to contain the <INSERT NAME> Fire. Their swift and coordinated response has been crucial in protecting our roads and preserving the natural environment," said <insert approved spokesperson>.

Although no further disruptions are anticipated, travelers are encouraged to download the Monroe County Sheriff's Office app for real-time traffic alerts, including future road closures, re-openings, and slowdowns.



# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: OWNED & EARNED MEDIA

#### SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Depending on the duration of the road closures and severity of the brushfire, the TDC may adopt a selective channel strategy for real-time updates leveraging X (formerly Twitter) as a primary platform for timely communication. Image-focused social channels can continue to post inspiring branded imagery and videos unless the situation escalates for an extended period.

The TDC should continue to monitor all of its social media channels and have prepped responses for community management with the latest updates and monitor sentiment from engagement.

#### VFK WEBSITE

Depending on the length of the road closure, the website home page can feature an alert banner that leads to up-to-date information on the road closure, the status of brush fire containment, and any impacts on visibility owing to smoke. This should be updated every time new information is received.

The messaging should also emphasize that the destination remains open for business, while noting any specific tourism areas or businesses that are directly affected and/or temporarily closed owing to the road closures or brush fire.

As access roads reopen and the brush fire largely contained, website content should be refreshed to reflect the latest updates, highlighting positive news such as the lack of damage to homes or businesses and confirming that all local businesses are open and operating.

#### PAID MEDIA

The TDC's Visit Florida Keys & Key West paid media plan should be reviewed during this period of crisis, however unless the road closure or infrastructure failure is going to last a long time, no changes to the paid media program are necessary.

Sustained road closure(s) may require paid media to be paused or messaging shifted in drive markets until emergency is over. Fly market and national paid media can likely remain unchanged.

#### EARNED MEDIA

Proactive pitching will be halted in Florida and other drive markets during the crisis period with time reallocated to monitor the situation in local/regional media.

TURNER will monitor and flag all media coverage in order to assess the proactive recovery plan if needed, caused by catastrophic damage to infrastructure that prevents road access to The Florida Keys & Key West for an extended period.

# LEVEL THREE

## EMERGENCY: INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE - ROAD CLOSURE FROM BRUSH FIRE

### RECOVERY TIMELINE + CHECKLIST

Recovery timelines and actions will vary based on how long access to/from Keys occurs, media and social attention, etc.

#### 1: ASSESS DAMAGE AND DEBRIEF

- Coordinate with appropriate emergency services offices (Sheriff, FDOT) to confirm:
  - Extent of physical damage to road infrastructure; confirm reopening of roads
  - Safety conditions for travel
  - Fire containment and likelihood for flare ups
- Internal debrief - TDC staff, agency partners, impacted destination stakeholders.
- Flag any outstanding misinformation online and correct. See if there were visitor complaints on social due to missed flights, stranded children, etc. Align messaging.

#### 2: DETERMINE & COORDINATE RECOVERY RESPONSE

- Coordinate messaging for unified response if warranted. Emphasize positive updates.
- If needed, draft reactive holding statement to use if contacted by media (if media or social attention).
- Determine need and extent for a South Florida / drive market recovery campaign

#### 3: IMPLEMENT RECOVERY RESPONSE IF WARRANTED

- If needed, launch integrated South Florida / drive market recovery campaign which could include:
  - Paid Media: broadcast TV, newspapers (online) and radio (*no need to change anything unless we have a bridge collapse or road closure and access to the Keys is lost for an extended period*)
  - Influencer Marketing: consider working with local content creators and community opinion leaders on road trip/hosted visit to The Florida Keys & Key West to share real time experience.
  - Owned Channels: amplify influencer content with paid boosting and collabs with VFK's social channels.
  - Earned Media: pitch compelling, upcoming events to drive incremental earned media with open access and for business messaging.
- Determine if need to sustain a piece of recovery messaging or shift to regular marketing activity.

#### 4: EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

- TDC/partner debrief to evaluate effective of communication efforts. Keep key learnings list in how we work with county, emergency services, municipalities.
- Measure engagement, sentiment and conversion metrics if warranted. Utilize Barcelona Principles method.
- Update crisis communications plan with any learnings.
- Archive all content and assets developed for future crisis use.

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### SITUATION: NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SARGASSUM ON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

#### HOW DOES THE TDC, EMERGENCY SERVICES, OR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT LEARN ABOUT SARGASSUM PILED UP ON A COUNTY BEACH?

- Any of the above parties may learn about sargassum impacts within the destination from:
  - Media exposure (typically very negative and exaggerated)
  - Visitor or resident complaints on social media
  - The Florida Department of Health (Monroe County)
  - NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
  - Tourism industry or community partners
  - Local city council officials / PIO's within the broader county

#### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SARGASSUM BEACH CLEAN UP IN MONROE COUNTY?

If the health department issues an alert, then Monroe County emergency management will get involved. If not, it's up to the municipalities to determine if they want to clean up the decaying seaweed / sargassum from their public beaches. Hotel partners often clean up their own beaches regularly but there are instances where the hotel beach is clear, but the public beach next to it has a build up of the decaying seaweed. Florida State Parks can't clean sargassum off the beaches unless it's a hazard (to turtles, humans, etc.)

#### WHY IS SARGASSUM A THREAT TO TOURISM?

Sargassum can have a significant negative impact on tourism. Excessive amounts of sargassum washing ashore can create unsightly beaches, produce foul odors and respiratory irritation due to the gases released when it decomposes, and restrict recreational activities, all of which deter tourists from visiting affected areas. Sargassum, a type of floating brown algae, offers important ecological benefits in the open ocean but poses significant risks when it washes ashore in large quantities. Information and unsightly photos can spread quickly on social media and media outlets, with a spotlight placed on the beach / city. This can lead to a decrease in tourism revenue for local economies.

More info about Sargassum from [National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA).

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### COMMS TEAM WORKSHEET QUESTIONS

- Where in the Florida Keys & Key West is Sargassum currently landing? Are some hotels cleaning it up and it's piling up on public beaches?
- How did we learn of the Sargassum complaints?
- Is Sargassum affecting any other areas in South & Central Florida?
- What is the volume of accumulation being observed?
- Are any beaches / coast areas temporarily closed or have restricted access owing to Sargassum build up?
- Are there any public health or safety concerns from decomposing seaweed? Did the health department issue a warning?
- Have any tourism industry partners reporting operational disruptions from the Sargassum (i.e. cancellations, unable to operate etc.)
- Have visitors and/or locals been sharing and commenting about sargassum in the destination on social media?
- Has the media picked covered this information yet? where?
- What are the short / medium / long term forecasts for Sargassum landings this season in The Florida Keys & Key West?
- Which entities are responsible for Sargassum removal in each DAC?
- How quickly can clean up crews be mobilized?

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING

*Examples only, every situation is different, statements vary.*

- ✓ Local tourism industry
- ✓ Current visitors in destination
- ✓ Forward bookings from travelers
- ✓ Media (reactive if there are inbound queries)
- ✓ Travel Trade
- ✓ Meeting Planners

### LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Sargassum is a seasonal, naturally occurring seaweed that can appear on shorelines in sporadic locations throughout Florida. Local community and hospitality partners are proactively working to manage the specific areas affected, to minimize impact for visitors. For current conditions, visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website.

### CURRENT VISITORS IN DESTINATION

Sargassum is a seasonal, naturally occurring seaweed that can appear on shorelines in sporadic locations throughout Florida. It can be a valuable part of the destination's marine ecosystem. As it moves with tides, currents and wind, it can provide shade and a safe haven for baitfish, and gamefish such as mahi-mahi and sea turtles.

Local community and hospitality partners are proactively working to manage the specific beach affected, to minimize impact for visitors.

Florida Department of Health (FDOH) does not recommend beach goers to engage with sargassum. The agency has developed the following guidelines related to sargassum on beaches:

- Always supervise children at the beach.
- Avoid touching or swimming near seaweed to avoid irritation by tiny sea creatures that live in it.
- Stay away from the impacted beach if you experience irritation or breathing problems. Avoid or limit time if you have asthma or other respiratory problems.
- Close windows and doors if you are staying near an impacted beach.

For current conditions and other travel tips, visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website.

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING (CONT.)

#### FORWARD BOOKINGS (REACTIVE ONLY, CONSUMER)

Sargassum is a naturally occurring, seasonal seaweed that may appear along some shorelines in The Florida Keys. Its presence is influenced by ocean currents and weather patterns, and conditions can vary widely by location and day.

The majority of beaches in The Florida Keys & Key West remain unaffected, so there should not be an impact on your upcoming travel. *<insert tailored info if specific to one beach with attention i.e. if sargassum at <insert location>, the hotel cleans it up daily at 7 a.m. thus visitors don't experience seaweed on the beach>*. From world-renowned diving and snorkeling on offshore coral reefs to exploring historic sites, enjoying waterfront dining, and soaking in local culture and music, there are endless ways to enjoy the destination beyond the shoreline.

Local officials and hospitality partners actively monitor shoreline conditions and are committed to maintaining clean and welcoming environments wherever accumulation occurs.

For the latest updates, tips, and information on current conditions, travelers are encouraged to visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website.

#### MEDIA STATEMENT (REACTIVE)

Sargassum is a naturally occurring, seasonal seaweed that can accumulate in varying amounts along shorelines across Florida, including parts of the Florida Keys & Key West. Its presence is influenced by ocean currents and weather patterns, and it tends to vary widely by location and time of year.

The tourism industry across the Florida Keys & Key West actively monitors conditions in coordination with local municipalities and hospitality partners. Clean-up efforts are *<underway or handled daily by <TK hotel name> and/or in any areas where shoreline accumulation occurs>*, to ensure minimal disruption for visitors.

For the latest beach conditions, traveler tips, and updated information on affected areas, please visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### AUDIENCE & MESSAGING (CONT.)

#### TRAVEL TRADE (REACTIVE)

Sargassum is a natural and seasonal seaweed that may occasionally appear along certain shorelines in the Florida Keys & Key West. It's carried by ocean currents and tends to vary from day to day and place to place.

For clients with upcoming bookings, there's no need to change plans as the vast majority of our beaches are unaffected and there are endless experiences that make The Florida Keys & Key West so special. From offshore snorkeling and diving to fishing, cultural tours, waterfront dining, sunset sails, and live music, The Florida Keys & Key West offers a wide variety of adventures.

<INSERT update if there was a question on specific location with attention/visuals> Local tourism and hospitality teams actively manage impacted areas to ensure visitors continue to enjoy a memorable and welcoming stay. For real-time updates and travel tips, clients can visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website

#### MEETINGS TRADE (REACTIVE)

Sargassum is a naturally occurring, seasonal seaweed that may appear along some shorelines in The Florida Keys & Key West, depending on ocean currents and weather patterns. Its presence is localized and changes frequently. Many beaches and waterfront venues remain unaffected.

Meeting planners with upcoming programs that include beach-based elements are encouraged to:

- Check with venues and/or local DMC partner to confirm current conditions at specific locations
- Explore alternative waterfront or indoor options if adjustments are needed
- Communicate with local hospitality partners, who are proactively managing any affected areas to ensure events continue smoothly

Importantly, the majority of meetings, group activities, and signature experiences in the destination, such as offshore excursions, cultural tours, group dining, and wellness offerings remain completely unaffected.

The Florida Keys and Key West continue to offer a compelling backdrop for successful gatherings, with warm hospitality, vibrant settings, and a wide array of flexible venues.

For current shoreline conditions and planning tips, visit [the sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: OWNED & EARNED MEDIA

#### SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

During periods of sporadic Sargassum accumulation on destination beaches, rework social media posts to showcase non-beach scenes, other experiences across The Florida Keys & Key West (or show beaches without sargassum, as sometimes there can be an exaggeration that 'all' beaches are piled high with sargassum when it was one beach).

Monitor conversation and sentiment. Have prepared, approved responses for prompt community management shared via DMs.

Should social conversation escalate, generating negative sentiment, publicly join the conversation with pre-approved responses to provide balance to the issue.

#### VFK WEBSITE

Update existing [the sargassum information](#) linked from the homepage of [the TDC website](#).

#### PAID MEDIA

Should not be impacted, but Visit Florida Keys & Key West's paid media plan can be reviewed if a lot of attention paid to this topic in-state or nationally. If warranted, switch out digital creative showing beaches to other locations/experiences in the destination.

#### EARNED MEDIA

Monitor coverage of Sargassum issue - locally, regionally and nationally. Use prepared responses for media inquiries that warrant a response.

Pull back on pitching beach-related experiences (depending on coverage/attention), and upweight unique events, marine conservation, wellness, culinary and history/heritage story ideas.

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### RECOVERY TIMELINE + CHECKLIST

*Recovery timelines and actions will vary based on media and online attention.*

#### STEP 1: DAYS 1-3: IMMEDIATE IMPACT + SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- Identify specific beaches/waterfront parks/public access points to the water impacted by Sargassum.
- Coordinate with local municipalities, DACs and industry partners to understand cleanup progress and ongoing needs. Confirm responsible clean-up agencies by DAC (city, county, state, private sector/industry).
- FDOH / NOAA evaluates health and safety: air quality/odors, water access restrictions at impacted areas.
- Create/update FAQ for visitors and the industry. Establish “clean beach” alerts with participating municipalities or partners to help guide visitors (if needed).
- Prepare holding language for stakeholder emails and media inquiries.
- Coordinate messaging with Visit Florida and/or other affected Florida DMOs for a unified tone.
- Flag misinformation online and correct.

#### STEP 2: DAYS 4 - 7 OPERATION RESPONSE + COMMS READINESS

- Update existing [sargassum information](#) page on the TDC website with link from homepage as needed. Page can include a map or a list of affected and unaffected beaches as well as updates on clean up (as long as it's updated frequently).
- Coordinate messaging with local municipalities, DACs, the tourism industry and other community partners.
- Capture video/images of clean-up crews and unaffected areas for use as needed in communications.
- Provide approved talking points to front-line hospitality staff.

#### STEP 3: WEEK 2 - POSITIVE MESSAGING + INITIAL RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

- If the impact of Sargassum is severe across the destination:
  - Begin daily media alerts outlining what's still open and not impacted across the destination.
  - Use onsite webcams across the destination to share real-time visuals to guide visitor expectations, amplify on VFK's social channels with paid boosting.
  - Encourage destination partners and residents to share firsthand photos of clear beaches using an approved hashtag.
  - Utilize owned and earned media channels to showcase alternative visitor experiences not impacted by Sargassum across The Florida Keys & Key West.
  - Monitor media daily and develop and utilize approved messaging to respond to negative coverage and journalist inquiries.

# LEVEL TWO

## ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT: SARGASSUM

### RECOVERY TIMELINE + CHECKLIST

*Recovery timelines and actions will vary based on media and online attention.*

#### STEP 3 (CONT): WEEK 2 - POSITIVE MESSAGING + INITIAL RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

- If the impact is minimal across the destination:
  - Monitor for new accumulation points and successful clean-up activity to keep the microsite updated.
  - Use onsite live webcams across the destination to share real-time visuals to guide visitor expectations.
  - Monitor media daily and develop and utilize approved messaging to respond to negative coverage and journalist inquiries.

#### STEP 4: WEEKS 3-4: ONGOING REPUTATION MANAGEMENT + BAU

- Resume business as usual (BAU) marketing activity if halted.
- Continue to monitor social media sentiment and editorial coverage for lingering misconceptions. Correct as needed with approved messaging.
- Sustain visitor confidence with the ongoing paid amplification of real-time footage of web cams across the destination from Visit Florida Keys & Key West's social media channels.

#### STEP 5: WEEKS 4 - 6: EVALUATIONS & LEARNINGS

- TDC/partner debrief to evaluate effective communication efforts. Keep a key learning list.
- Update Sargassum response templates, checklists, and FAQ language.
- Archive all content and assets developed for future use.
- Measure engagement, sentiment and conversion metrics from recovery campaign activities if needed.

# MONITORING & REPORTING DURING A CRISIS

For each situation, TURNER will provide real-time traditional and online media reporting that includes links to articles and online sentiment, as well as strategic guidance on media relations response/messaging; our measurement practices adhere to the Barcelona Principles. OMG will monitor social media and share activity, sentiment and response recommendations. Sample media reporting from the recent road closure due to the brush fires below:

## NEWS COVERAGE

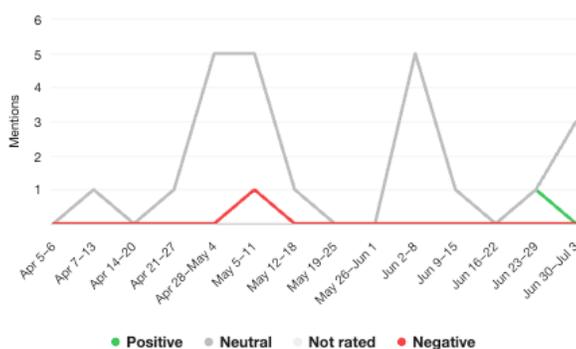
Sample below - real-time and flagged via email for trending stories.

Date	Outlet	Outlet Type	Article	Impressions	Florida Keys Mention
5/8/25	Boca News Now	Online	<a href="#">Florida Keys Burning: Major Roads In, Out Closed</a>	217,492	☑
5/8/25	CBS News Miami	Online	<a href="#">"Growing brush fire impacts travel to Florida Keys</a>	43927397	☑
5/8/25	CBS News Miami	Online	<a href="#">Access to Florida Keys cut off as 18-mile stretch and Card Sound Road shut down due to brush fire"</a>	43927397	☑
5/8/25	CBS News West Palm Beach	Online	<a href="#">Brush fire shuts down northbound traffic on U.S. 1's 18-Mile Stretch out of Florida Keys</a>	1024023	☑
5/8/25	Islander News	Online	<a href="#">Brush fire closes road leading into the Florida Keys</a>	78801	☑
5/8/25	Local 10 News	Online	<a href="#">Crews battling brush fire in southwest Miami-Dade</a>	1100933	☑
5/8/25	Miami Herald	Online	<a href="#">Some roads into the Keys reopen as fire crews try to contain a brushfire</a>	3,676,949	☑
5/8/25	Yahoo! News	Online	<a href="#">All roads to Keys reopen as fire crews continue to battle brushfire</a>	48,118,472	☑
5/8/25	NBC Miami	Online	<a href="#">Wildfire burns in Miami-Dade, strands drivers going in and out of Florida Keys</a>	882144	☑
5/8/25	The Tampa Free Press	Online	<a href="#">Brush Fire Forces Closure Of 18-Mile Stretch And Card Sound Road, Disrupting Florida Keys Traffic</a>	63,259	☑
	WPLG (Local 10)	Online	<a href="#">Brush fire continues to disrupt traffic to and from the Florida Keys and Florida City</a>	1100933	☑
5/8/25	WSVN Miami	Online	<a href="#">Brush fire in South Miami-Dade burns nearly 350 acres, 25% contained; portions of US 1, Card Sound Road closed</a>	903,413	☑
5/8/25	WPBF News (ABC)	Online	<a href="#">News To Go: May 9, 2025</a>	256817	☑
5/9/25	CBS News Miami	Online	<a href="#">Card Sound Road Reopens as Brush Fire Continues</a>	43927397	☑

## SOCIAL DASHBOARDS

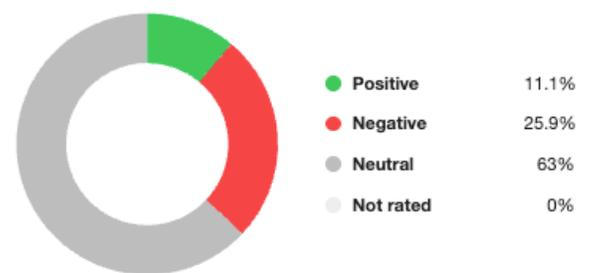
### Sentiment Trend

Last 90 days



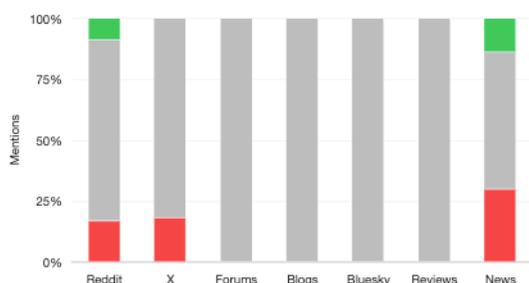
### Sentiment Breakdown

Last 90 days



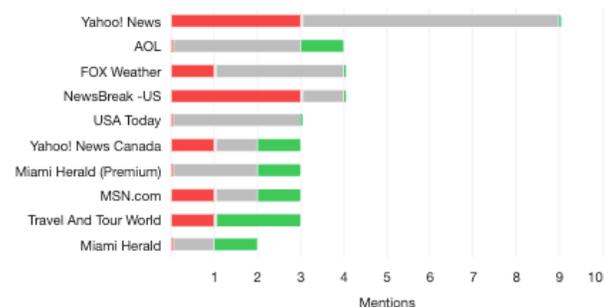
### Sentiment by Source Type

Last 90 days



### Top Publications with Sentiment

Last 90 days



# POST CRISIS EVALUATION FORM

Debriefing after a crisis or emergency is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications program, i.e. what worked, what didn't, did our avenues of communication reach stakeholders, media or social media reaction and how to improve future response strategies.

## SAMPLE POST-CRISIS DEBRIEF EVALUATION FORM FOR COMMS TEAM

### Situation Overview

- Issue/Emergency/Crisis with Alert Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 (name/duration of crisis):
- Cause of the situation:
- Has the situation been resolved or is it an ongoing issue:
- Perceived or verified impact on tourism:
- Which parties did we work with during this situation? MCEM, NWS, FDOH, Municipalities, Sheriff, Fire, etc.
  - Key learnings from chain of comms / needs for next situation:

### Communications Objectives

- What were our key communications goals i.e., public safety, minimizing media coverage of an issue, reputation management, minimizing cancellations?

### Audience & Messaging

- Who were our key audiences for this situation? (tourism stakeholders, visitors, media)
- Did we tailor messaging effectively for each audience?
- Were we transparent without causing alarm?
- Were we proactive with recovery messaging / plans?

### Channels & Tools

- What communication channels were used and evaluate effectiveness by platform (website alerts, email, text, press releases, social media, media interviews)?
- Discuss summary of media relations and social media monitoring i.e. sentiment, misinformation, tone.
- Did stakeholders receive important messages?

### Timing & Coordination

- Were we able to swiftly update communication as the situation evolved? any bottlenecks to improve?
- Did internal teams work together effectively (TDC, agency partners) i.e. roles clear? decision-making swift?

### Lessons Learned

- What worked well?
- What didn't work and why?
- What can we do different?
- Did we save all content and assets for future use in shared file?
- Do we need to update our crisis plan i.e. different parties, new contacts, platform, messaging.



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