



Maggie Valley | Waynesville | Lake Junaluska | Canton | Clyde

CRISIS
COMMUNICATION PLAN
for the
HAYWOOD COUNTY TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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The purpose of this plan is to provide industry partners of the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority with a communication plan to reference in the event of an emergency. The HCTDA hopes that this plan will provide it's partners with a cohesive plan for a variety of emergencies that could effect both the industry partners and visitors.

The procedures in this guide are designed to deal with a variety of emergencies that could arise throughout the county and directly affect our visiting population. These procedures do not cover every condition that might develop, and it may not always be feasible to follow every procedure.

It is important to recognize that the HCTDA will not be the lead agency in charge of many types of community-wide crises, e.g., natural disasters, violent crimes, terrorist attacks, etc. That means the HCTDA will likely not be in a lead position or spokesperson for most emergencies. Haywood County Government agencies, along with the Haywood County Emergency Services and local law enforcement will take precedence.

However, there are many other potential emergencies that could involve visitors, or the HCTDA office and the HCTDA is prepared to put a crisis response in place in order to communicate effectively with these audiences.

In the event HCTDA is contacted by members of the media for a statement on an unfolding emergency that is being managed by the Haywood Emergency Management Services, calls should be politely and firmly referred to the appropriate stakeholder.

Many kinds of situations have the potential to negatively impact the perception of Haywood County, NC as a desirable vacation destination as well as impede travel to and within the county. When these occur, the Haywood County Tourism Development Authority can help mitigate these situations through a coordinated involvement with the media, the local tourism industry and governmental agency. The details of such involvement form the basis of the Crisis Communication Plan.

MEDIA PROCEDURES

Television, radio, newspapers, and social media provide an excellent conduit for getting information to large numbers of people. As a result, information shared with the news media should be both timely and accurate. Mis-information, speculation, and "bits and pieces" of the story can be both confusing and damaging. Therefore, anyone other than the official HCTDA spokesperson should refrain from speaking with the media.

The HCTDA Executive Director, Chairman of the HCTDA Board of Directors, or the HCTDA Communications Manager will serve as official spokespersons should an emergency situation arise. In the event of an emergency, one of the three identified spokespersons will determine a safe location for the media and any and all assistance will be provided to aid in effective communications.

What constitutes a crisis?

A) Incident-based crisis with no advanced warning. Examples include but are not limited to:

- A sharp rise in violent crimes, or a particularly heinous crime or string of crimes, especially against visitors to Haywood County.
- Terrorist or criminal activities, whether domestic or international in origin, such as bombings and release of chemical or biological events agents.
- Outbreak of a communicable, dangerous disease.
- Nuclear incident.
- Rock slides
- Forest Fires
- Flash Flooding
- Landslides
- Animal attacks
- Tornadoes or other sudden and severe weather affecting tourism-related areas
- An incident that disrupts a major tourist traffic route into Haywood County for an extended period of time.

B) Developing Crisis in which warning signs may be present. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Extremely severe winter weather including blizzards, ice storms, and snowfalls of significantly large amounts that cause major implications.
- Hurricanes
- Civil unrest
- Controversial legislations
- Strikes
- Political/religious boycotts
- Unusual or uncharacteristically severe weather patterns (extensive drought leading to increase in wild fires, etc.)
- Other developing incidents not anticipated

C) HCTDA Internal Incidents

- An emergency incident or issue at the HCTDA Office and Visitor Center
- interruption of service due to staff death or injury
- questionable business practices
- discrimination
- preferential actions
- criminal acts by staff not in the line of duty
- other incidents not anticipated

How does Haywood County learn of the crisis?

The initial notification to the Haywood County TDA and its quasi-parent agency, Haywood County Government, that a crisis has either erupted or is potentially developing can come from several sources, including but not limited to:

- The mainstream media, whether through print/broadcast coverage or reporter inquiry
- Social media
- State/local emergency response officials
- Governor's Office
- Members of area Travel and Tourism Boards
- EDPNC and Visit North Carolina staff, including their Welcome Center and International Office personnel
- Reports from NC Tourism industry partners

Any real or potential crisis situation is immediately made known to the Executive Director (or delegated backup), who consults with the HCTDA Board Executive Committee and determines the appropriate level of response for the Haywood TDA. The major question at this point is:

How does the Haywood County TDA respond?

Every crisis is different. Each will have unique or unexpected circumstances that will require variations to (and possibly deviations from) even the most exhaustively detailed crisis management plan. Therefore, the HCTDA's response to any given crisis, while following general guidelines, will also be flexible enough to accommodate changing or unforeseen conditions. However, in the event that the Executive Director deems a given situation to be actually or potentially serious, a decision will be made to activate the TDA Communication Response Team (CRT).

Major Crisis Response

Activation of the Haywood County Emergency Management Services may result in the activation of the Haywood County TDA communications program, which consists of notifying CRT members and arranging for an immediate meeting of as many as can be reached, or the designated backup staff. Depending on circumstances, the meeting may be done face to face, via conference call or a combination of the two. The nature and the extent of the crisis, along with its current and/or potential impact on tourism, are discussed and input actively solicited from particularly impacted segments of the tourism industry.

HCTDA team members will be assigned as responsible for various response functions based on the following model *(Please Note: Functions may be based on team availability due to situational circumstances):*

- CRT Coordinators: Executive Director and Communications Manager
- Principal Spokesperson: Executive Director
- Other spokespeople: Communications Manager; HCTDA Board of Directors Chairman
- Media Relations: Executive Director and Communications Manager
- Liaison with Local Government, Haywood Co. Emergency Response Services, and HCTDA BOD: Executive Director and Communications Manager
- Communications with Industry Partners: Marketing Manager
- Website updates: Marketing Manager
- Social media management: Social Media Manager
- Communications with group travel and tour operators and relevant organizations: Group Sales Manager
- Liaison with local, state and federal law enforcement: Executive Director
- Internal communications with Haywood TDA Visitor Center Staff: Executive Director and Visitor Center Manager
- Communications with the Visit NC Communications and Public Relations Manager: Communications Manager

In addition, the CRT will be responsible for planning and implementing the HCTDA's situation-specific communications strategy. A location will be chosen for the Communication Command Center. In most instances, this will be HCTDA's office in Maggie Valley. If, however, that location is not functional because it has been impacted by the crisis, the team will operate from another location to be determined.

CRT will notify travel industry leaders and all parties of the location and contact number of the Communication Command Center.

Once situated, the CRT will determine:

- Key messages concerning the crisis, including official statements to be sent to all partners for inclusion in their releases.
- The audience for those messages, such as visitors already in Haywood County, visitors preparing to come to Haywood County, tour operators/ travel agents, tourism-related businesses, etc.
- The appropriate media for conveying those messages.
- The appropriate methods for contact.

Timely situational summaries could be placed on visitncsmokies.com and social media channels. If warranted, a formal news conference or media briefing will be arranged. As the crisis continues, the CRT will carefully monitor how the media coverage evolves and respond as appropriate. All media contacts will be logged in

detail, including the name of the reporter, media outlet represented, telephone number, email address and a short summary of what was discussed during the contact.

The Recovery Phase

Once the crisis is over and recovery efforts are underway, the CRT, in consultation with travel industry partners, will determine how best to support the effort on behalf of the industry. This may include:

- Periodic status reports to the media, Haywood County TDA staff, HCTDA Board, travel industry partners, and the HCTDA Visitor Center as various areas reopen to visitors.
- Situational updates for specific media, such as the Weather Channel and national and statewide media outlets.
- News conferences and remotes as necessary.
- Updates on visitncsmokies.com and social media channels as warranted.
- Post-crisis messages including news releases and possible advertising when necessary.
- Post-crisis meeting of the CRT to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications effort.

Lower Level Crisis Response

Not every crisis is a major one requiring a full emergency response from the Haywood County TDA. If, after the initial notifications, the Executive Director determines that the situation can be handled without convening all members of the CRT and setting up a Communication Command Center, a more conservative approach will be taken. That approach, however, will probably include many if not most of the elements already referenced in the Major Crisis Response plan, such as crafting key messages, identifying target audiences and employing the best media vehicles to reach those audiences.

Media Referral

Part of the Haywood County TDA's function in less intensive crisis situations will be to provide a media referral service. Of course, the HCTDA will provide the media with accurate situational summaries and "official statements" on behalf of the state's tourism industry during a crisis. However, in cases where it is inappropriate for the HCTDA staff to comment on the specifics of a crisis or speculate on how that crisis may ultimately impact Haywood County visitation, referrals will be made to the most appropriate person. In those instances, the HCTDA will work with local organizations, if requested, to help prepare a coordinated response.

Communications Assistance with emergencies outside of Haywood County

In some instances, emergencies and crisis situations may occur outside of Haywood County but still directly impact Haywood County. Example: A coastal hurricane requiring evacuation of residents and visitors to the far inland areas of the state. In situations like this, the HCTDA may activate communications efforts to help displaced residents and travelers find accommodations and assistance. In situations where these emergencies may directly impact Haywood County, the HCTDA will activate communication efforts with local and state industry partners and emergency officials to assist accordingly. The CRT will contact their assigned outlets as needed and communication plans will be projected publicly to assist in these situations.

Haywood County Visitor Center Emergency Management Plan

In the instance of a major emergency or accident at the Haywood County Visitor Center and HCTDA Offices, HCTDA staff will promptly notify emergency officials by calling 911 or the Maggie Valley Police Department. Based on the scenario, if visitors and staff require evacuation, staff will assist and move towards the nearest and safest exit point.

HCTDA Assistance for the Haywood County Emergency Management Services

In many instances emergency situations impact not only Haywood County residents but visitors as well. In the instance of a major emergency, the Haywood County TDA will promptly assist the Haywood County Emergency Management Services and local law enforcement to make sure our visitors are protected and helped in any way deemed necessary.

This may require actions such as providing contact information and location of accommodations/rental properties or providing all accommodations with set guidelines to follow in the case of an emergency. The Haywood TDA maintains a comprehensive, updated contact list of Haywood County lodging partners that includes hotels, motels, inns, resorts/ranches, B&Bs, and vacation home rentals (houses, cabins, cottages, condos, etc). They also maintain a list of Haywood County tourism partners that includes attractions, restaurants, shops, community organizations and more. **The TDA reserves the right to share these contact lists with emergency officials if needed to help assist in times of a crisis or emergency.** There is also variety of additional information that the Haywood TDA can provide the Haywood County EMS and local law enforcement to assist in an emergency and the HCTDA claims the right to share this information in emergency situations.

In Case of a Fire, Medical or Police Emergency, please call 911

For a non-emergency, please contact the appropriate outlet below:

Haywood County Emergency Offices

- Haywood County Sheriffs Office: 828-452-6666
- Haywood County Emergency Management Office: 828-456-2391
- Haywood County EMS Office: 828-627-1143
- North Carolina State Highway Patrol: 1-800-445-1772

Police

- Maggie Valley Police Department: 828-926-0867
- Waynesville Police Department: 828-456-5363
- Lake Junaluska Assembly Security (non-emergencies): 828-452-5911
- Canton Police Department: 828-648-2376
- Clyde Police Department: 828-627-2940

Fire

- Canton Fire Department - 828-648-3418
- Center Pigeon, Clyde, Cruso, Lake Junaluska, Maggie Valley, North Canton, and Saunook Fire Departments - 828-452-6600
- Waynesville Fire Department - 456-8611

Medical

- Haywood Regional Medical Center: 828-456-7311
262 Leroy George Dr, Clyde, NC 28721 (24 hour emergency help)
- Haywood Urgent Care (Canton): 828-648-0282
55 Buckeye Cove Rd, Canton, NC 28716
Hours: 8:00 AM - 6:30 PM - 7 Days a Week
- Haywood Urgent Care (Waynesville): 828-452-8890
556 Hazelwood Road, Waynesville
Hours: 8:00 AM - 6:30 PM - 7 Days a Week

Emergency Pet Care/Animal Services

- Haywood County Animal Services: 828-456-5338
- Haywood Animal Emergency: 828-452-1478
3258 Asheville Rd, Waynesville 28786
Hours: Monday - Friday - 5:30 PM - 12:00 AM
Saturday & Sunday - 8:30 AM - 12:00 AM
- REACH - Regional Emergency Animal Care Hospital - 828-665-4399
677 Brevard Rd., Asheville NC 28806
Hours: 24 Hours - 7 Days a Week

Large Animal/Livestock Emergency Boarding Assistance

- Haywood County Fairgrounds - 828-400-1704
758 Crabtree Rd., Waynesville 28785