

Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Division of Travel and Tourism

Whitepaper: Three Ways to Effectively Promote Your Tourism Business During a Crisis

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Proactive communication with travelers through relevant media outlets is especially important for businesses in parts of the state affected by flooding. You don't want to wait until journalists—or worse, frustrated travelers—start calling. And if your business is located in an area that isn't threatened by flooding, it's important to make sure travelers are aware of that fact as well. By acting in a proactive manner, you can establish your business as a leader and turn a potentially negative situation into a positive opportunity for growth.

Here are three easy-to-implement ideas for effectively communicating with travelers and the media during the balance of the travel season.

1. Update signage, websites and other collateral promptly.

- Convey information using on-site signage.
 - Post changes to hours/days of operation.
 - Notify visitors of planned schedule changes well in advance.
 - Work with what you have. Don't get hung up waiting for "perfect" signage. Even handwritten temporary signage is better than nothing.
- Keep your online presence current. Use your website to notify potential visitors of any changes to hours, service offerings, or access routes.
- Make sure the information you're posting/sharing is up to date and consistent across all mediums.

2. Leverage Nebraska Tourism and other online resources to get the word out.

- Make announcements/updates on your Facebook and/or Twitter page. Include links to full text and supporting information and images on your website. Engaging fans and followers will help you spread the word to their networks, enhancing the reach of your message.
- Send announcements and updates to the Division's Media Coordinator, Shannon Peterson at shannon.j.peterson@nebraska.gov and to area CVBs for posting on their websites and social media platforms.
- Post updates to the VisitNebraska Facebook page ([Facebook.com/VisitNebraska](https://www.facebook.com/VisitNebraska)).
- Encourage visitors to give a first-hand account of their experiences at your destination on your Facebook page and/or website. This can effectively dispel myths about the effect of area flooding (if they exist).

3. Utilize the news media to communicate with travelers and other relevant publics.

- Send out news release updates when changes occur.
 - Write timely, relevant and newsworthy releases for distribution to the news media and to post on your website. Make related high-resolution digital images available for journalists whenever possible. If you don't have access to digital images, the Division's website [Press Room](#) allows industry partners to download hi-resolution images. Providing quality images will increase the likelihood your release gets picked up. News releases should state that you're open despite flooding in the region and include your hours of operation and the roads/highways that are open for access.

- Distribute releases to a targeted media list that includes relevant local, regional and tourism industry journalists. See “*Building a Targeted Media List*” on page 2.

Building a Targeted Media List

The first step in building a targeted list is to consider the media you hope to reach. Do you want to target journalists at your local newspapers, regional travel magazines, radio and television stations in surrounding cities, or all of the above? Begin by making a list of the news outlets to which your information would be applicable. Consider both geographic scope and demographic markets.

Your next step is research. Use Google or another search engine to find the websites of the media you are targeting. Two good resources for in-state media contacts are the Nebraska Broadcasters Association (ne-ba.org), and the Nebraska Press Association (nebpress.com). Consider who the most relevant journalist is to receive your news at each outlet, and target them specifically. Do you want to reach travel journalists, business writers, city beat reporters, or all of the above? For each story pitch, it’s typically most effective to pitch similar types of journalists the same story.

Here are some things to keep in-mind regarding specific media types.

- Newspapers often have reporters who cover specific topics such as travel, business, or local events, making targeting and building relationships with appropriate local journalists relatively easy.
- For radio, keep in mind that news directors are always looking for stories that create strong visuals for listeners. So anything you can do to help them develop stories that use audio to create images in listeners’ minds, the more likely it is your story will run.
- Establishing relationships with key producers and assignment editors at local television stations is vital to securing placement of your message. These relationships will be a valuable resource for discussing potential story angles and determining what will resonate with the station’s audience.
- Outreach to bloggers is most effective when you have a keen understanding of the topic(s) covered by the targeted blogs, as well as the specific interest areas of the blogger.
- Regional and national magazines often utilize a mixture of internally generated and freelance-generated content, making research into which publications and writers are appropriate to target especially important. Lead times for magazines are generally longer than those for newspapers or the broadcast media. Often, a magazine placement can take 1–6 months to see in print, which is important to keep in mind when dealing with time-sensitive news.

It is always a good idea to compile journalist contacts into a spreadsheet or database for later use.

Working with the Media

- Follow up – Journalists receive a great deal of information each day. To ensure your release has been received and seen by the targeted journalist, conduct a quick follow-up call 1–3 hours after sending it. This is also a good time to ask if there are any questions about the information contained in the release.
- Be succinct – Due to the immense quantity of information journalists receive each day, brevity is appreciated almost as much as accuracy. Don’t waste time with small talk or superfluous calls or messages.

- Be accurate – Journalists value resources that give them well-researched, timely and accurate information. As a result, it's important that you have your material proofread by someone other than yourself before it's distributed.
- Say “thank you” – Watch for your story to run, and be sure to thank the journalist you worked with for their accurate, professional coverage.