

**MEDIA CONTACT**

Rachel Dinbokowitz

[rachel@seemonterey.com](mailto:rachel@seemonterey.com)

831-657-6434

**Monterey County Hospitality Industry Aids in Wildfire Relief**  
***Hotels and attractions unite to support those impacted by County-wide fires***

Monterey, Calif., September 1, 2020 – Monterey County residents and the greater region have been hit hard by multiple crises in 2020 – first with the COVID-19 pandemic and lately by widespread wildfires raging throughout the county and neighboring areas in California. Through it all, Monterey County’s hospitality and tourism community have acted quickly to adapt their protocols and policies for the safety of their guests, employees and community, as well as partner with local government agencies to support those in need from wildfire devastation.

As hotel and lodging properties saw their employees, neighbors and community members evacuated from their homes due to the River, Carmel and Dolan fires, more than 70 hotels along the Monterey Peninsula offered deeply discounted accommodations available to evacuees and first responders. Additionally, many hotels, such as InterContinental The Clement Monterey, lifted pet restrictions to accommodate residents and their furry companions.

“We are proud of how Monterey County’s hotel and lodging industry stepped up and prioritized evacuees before other guests during the peak of our wildfires,” said Jeroen Gerrese, chair of Monterey County Hospitality Association and general manager at Sanctuary Beach Resort. “The health and well-being of our more than 27,000 employees, their families and our community is a top priority.”

Collectively, during the week of August 17, hotels offered more than \$1.1 million in discounted savings compared to the previous week to support the evacuees during the worst of the wildfires.

“We were devastated to see our communities and state succumb to yet another crisis,” said Kevin Ellis, board chair of Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau and general manager at Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa. “One of the things I love most about Monterey County’s hospitality community is how we quickly respond and support one another during times of need.”

In addition to hotels, two of Monterey County’s largest entities, WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca and Monterey Conference Center (MCC), offered assistance as evacuation centers. The raceway also provided free camping and RV spaces for evacuees.

MCC is currently working with FEMA and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services to be a center where residents and businesses impacted by the River, Carmel and Dolan fires can connect with local, state and federal agencies from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. through September 5.

Since April, MCC had adapted its conference space to showcase socially distant meetings and is using its plan and safety protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to evacuees. “MCC has been sitting empty since Monterey County’s shelter-in-place restrictions in mid-March,” said Doug Philips, general manager at Monterey Conference Center. “Seeing the community in distress, we wanted to help however we

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could. We have the space and we have the ability to operate safely.” Additional event venues, including the Monterey County and Salinas Valley Fairgrounds, were also used for evacuation services.

Tourism is the number one industry on the Monterey Peninsula and second largest industry in Monterey County. The industry was estimated to lose \$500 million in the first 90 days of the pandemic, as well as lay off more than half of its 27,000 hospitality jobs. While tourism continues to struggle rebounding, Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau encourages residents to support local businesses impacted by the ongoing economic crisis responsibly.

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## **ABOUT MONTEREY COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

The Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau (Monterey County CVB) is a 501c6 organization that drives tourism for Monterey County. Tourism is the largest industry on the Monterey Peninsula and the second largest in the County. The MCCVB is a partnership of the hospitality community and local governments that aims to drive business growth through compelling marketing and targeted sales initiatives that maximize the benefits of tourism to its guests, members and the community. Travel spending in Monterey County was \$3.24 billion in 2019, representing a 3.3 percent increase from 2018. This \$3.24 billion in visitor spending supported 27,120 jobs, contributed \$296 million in total taxes and generated \$153 million local tax dollars that directly benefited the community. For more information, visit [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).