

Industry Update - Special Edition: 2020 Summer Safety & Preparedness

June 5, 2020

Greetings to our Travel Partners!

June 1 marked the first day of the Atlantic Hurricane Season. It seems surreal that as summer travel and hurricane season begin, our industry is also dealing with the effects of a global pandemic and evening curfews. It is a lot to consider all at once. Fortunately, tourism employees have proven to be strong, resilient, and nimble. Experience has taught us that preparation and planning are vital in responding to crises and disruptions. We also understand how remaining flexible can help us adapt to the next normal.

Summer brings an increase in visitors, as well as an increase in the potential for foul weather and ocean safety risks. Whether we are dealing with a natural disaster or a public health crisis, preparing for the worst (while hoping for the best) is the most effective way to help ensure the safety of our visitors and employees.

Planning Ahead

Preparing for the possibility of a hurricane and other ocean safety issues (shark encounters, rip currents, etc.), while continuing with efforts to prevent further spread of coronavirus, presents a unique set of circumstances. This year we must be extra-vigilant in our planning. Now is the time to stock up on essential items—many of which are already in short supply—cleaning agents, sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, bottled water, first aid supplies, batteries, non-perishable food, toiletries, flashlights, generators, protective gear, and other necessities for business continuity.

Key to effective crisis management is a current crisis communication and business continuity plan that is ready to implement as situations arise. Now is the time to update our databases, upgrade technology tools, and review social media policies to ensure efficient communication with visitors, government officials, stakeholders, vendors and staff. Current business continuity plans help ensure that office protocols and business operations continue as seamlessly as possible, regardless of the disruption.

The Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau updates its Crisis Communications and Business Continuity plans annually to coincide with the beginning of hurricane season. Each year we incorporate changes based on technology changes and upgrades, as well as best practices and lessons learned during recent crises.

Gathering Information – How You Can Help

In an effort to make sure that the CVB's database is up-to-date, please confirm that you are the Primary Contact for your business. It is up to each Primary Contact to forward communications to others on your staff that may benefit from the information. If you prefer to appoint someone else on your staff to be our primary contact, please provide contact updates (Name, Title, Email Address and Phone Number) to Connie Nelson: cvbpr@wilmingtonandbeaches.com.

Emergency Management

During a crisis, the CVB works closely with the New Hanover County Emergency Management Office and each of our three Beach Towns to gather facts and assess the situation. We also consult with the NC Dept. of Emergency Management, Visit North Carolina, and other state agencies. Additionally, we reach out to local lodging properties for room availability updates, assess cancelations, and address industry concerns. Your prompt and candid answers to these important communications are vital to keeping the CVB informed on how crises impact our industry.

Media Inquiries & Crisis Communications

We anticipate that there will be a lot of media interest due to the forecast for a more active-than-usual hurricane season. The Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau is prepared to respond responsibly to media during a crisis situation. If a media delegate contacts your business for a comment on behalf of the industry, we hope you will refer the media to the CVB's two official spokespeople: Communications/PR Director Connie Nelson (cvbpr@wilmingtonandbeaches.com; 910-332-8751) and President/CEO Kim Hufham (khufham@wilmingtonandbeaches.com; 910-332-8746).

The primary goal in any crisis is public safety. As such, our communications take on a less commercial tone, focusing on factual, truthful and timely information to ensure the public safety of visitors and our citizens. As soon as the crisis passes and it is safe to travel to the area, the CVB will communicate our return to business as usual and resume positive marketing messages.

Resources

As we prepare for a safe summer season ahead, the CVB provides the following links to online resources:

Ocean Safety:

- www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/ocean-safety-tips
- www.visitnc.com/story/tips-for-staying-safe-at-the-beach-this-summer

Hurricanes/Hazards:

- New Hanover County Emergency Operations: <https://em.nhcgov.com>
- To sign up for the county's emergency alerts: <https://nhcgov.onthealert.com/Terms/Index/?ReturnUrl=%2f>
- During crisis situations, the Wilmington and Beaches destination home page will feature a banner with messaging that applies to the situation in New Hanover County (weather alerts, travel updates, helpful links, etc.): www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com

Public Health:

- New Hanover County Health Dept.: <https://health.nhcgov.com/>
- NHC Health Dept.-Coronavirus: <https://health.nhcgov.com/your-environment/public-health/coronavirus/>
- NC Dept. of Health & Human Services: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/>
- NC Covid-19 Hub: <https://www.nc.gov/covid19>

As always, thank you for your continued support, and best wishes for a safe season!