

Transient Populations and Business
Impacts of Evacuation

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Dr. Peter E. Tarlow

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A quick review of some of the basics of tourism security:

What Makes Tourism Security Special

Tourism security and evacuation plans must take into account

- Visitors often lack common sense
- They are anomic
- Inhibitions rarely work
- They are already stressed out
- They have no sense of time

During a Crisis or an Evacuation Tourism Security means working together and knowing what we have:

- How tourism works: What's new in your community's tourism, what is the state of your community tourism: The Data and how these data effect you. Why the police need to care about tourism.
- How well do you know your country and city?
- How well do you understand the economic and social impact of tourism on your community?
- How well do we understand how each agency is part of a total national tourism plan? A tourist does not see an agency he/she sees a city or nation. What we do impacts us all.

Some of the principle tourism components at high risk are:

- Shopping centers
- Amusement Areas/Parks
- Transportation Hubs
- Moving dates (for example Christmas shopping period) and symbolic dates (July 4th)
- Hotels and conventions
- Cruises
- Sporting events

Dealing with Natural Disasters Before and After.

Bad weather both in the Caribbean and in much of the Asian Pacific area along with fires in California ought to be a wake-up call to everyone in the tourism industry that theirs is a very fragile industry that is often weather dependent. Often, tourism economies and profits are at the mercy of Mother Nature. For example, Hurricane Frances chose one on the worst weekends to strike: the Labor Day Holiday, which in the US marks the end of the summer travel season. For many in the tourism industry, this one of those make or break weekends. Unfortunately, we cannot control the weather or climatic conditions, but it is a good idea to prepare for earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes/typhoons before they happen. Here are some suggestions that may help not only with climatic problems but also with man-made problems such as a terrorism attack.

-Develop plans before the disasters occur. Waiting until a hurricane strikes is too late to begin to take action. Develop a pre-emergency plan. This plan should be multi-faceted and should include caring for those who may be hurt or sick during the calamity, finding shelters for visitors, determining who is and is not staying at hotels, creating communication centers and a recovery business plan and marketing plan.

-Create good working relationships between private businesses and government agencies. Before a disaster strikes, make sure to know the names government officials to whom you may need to turn to. Go over your plans with these people and get their input prior to the crisis.

-Do not forget that disasters are often opportunities for crime. Make sure that the police department is part of the disaster plan, not only from the perspective of law enforcement but also from the perspective of public relations and economic recovery. What your police department says and how it acts toward visitors may impact your recovery and local tourism industry for years to come.

-Do not forget that law enforcement agencies do not often communicate well with each other. Most people outside of law enforcement simply assume that there is a good working relationship between various federal, state, provincial or local law enforcement agencies. Often this is not the case. If the media report a lack of cooperation during a period of crisis this will reflect poorly on your community. Furthermore, most police agencies are not trained in tourism oriented policing and have no idea as to how to handle the special needs of the tourism industry during times of crisis.

-Develop a protocol for addressing classified information. For example, in case of emergency, will hotels cooperate on allowing the names of guests to be released? If so, under what circumstances will this occur? When should health records be released and what is the responsibility of the local tourism industry regarding privacy versus public health issues?

-Develop a protocol as to who may need a security clearance. During times of the disasters, all sorts of legal clearances may be needed. Once the disaster has occurred, it is too late to begin to sort out legal issues. Develop a list now and obtain the necessary clearances during periods of calm. In a like manner, go over with your public health people what policies will be in place if a policy of triage should have to be implemented.

-Develop a visitor public health policy. In case of flooding, earthquakes or other natural disasters all sorts of new problems may arise. Visitors may have lost medication and not be able to obtain replacements, some people may not want particular medical problems to become part of the public record. Visitors will have higher levels of anxiety than if they had been at home and we may expect to see greater levels of stress-induced medical problems.

_Know or have a plan if your tourism industry covers a regional or multi-jurisdictional area. Whenever possible, develop a code of conduct and a working relationship between

agencies, hotels, restaurants, emergency shelters, and other relief agencies that cross city, county, provincial or state boundaries.

_Make sure that you have good toll-free telephone or Internet service and publicize where visitors can go to use these services. Visitors will want to call out and their loved ones will want to call them. As soon as possible, establish some form of free communication. Visitors will never forget this act of hospitality.

-Use your customer service skills and hospitality skills to take care of the first responders and emergency teams. These people will be overworked and often on the point of exhaustion. Recognize that they are not in the hospitality business, you are! Use your skills to ease their burdens and to help them help us.

_Begin long-term recovery programs immediately. These long-term programs should go far beyond simply marketing the area or providing lower prices. The program should also include such things as working with mental health professionals and establishing support facilities for visitors who happen to be survivors. When the visitor leaves the impacted area he/she will continue to suffer from the natural disaster. Get names, email addresses and telephone numbers and make sure that your visitors receive follow-up calls. These calls should never sell anything but simply let visitors know that your agency cares about them.

While each disaster has its own special characteristics, there are certain patterns that are already beginning to emerge from this major crisis. While none of us can turn to clock back to the days before Katrina devastated New Orleans, along with Mississippi's and Alabama's Gulf coasts, prudent thought can provide vital lessons for the tourism industry. Here are a few lessons we all need to relearn.

_Tourism is an industry that depends on the well being of the total community. The current crisis is not just about tourism but about the total community. The breaking of the New Orleans' levees touched everyone. As such this crisis ought to remind the entire tourism industry that it is only as safe as weakest part of its community's infrastructure.

Dr. Peter Tarlow
tourism@bihs.net
1-979-764-8402

No amount of marketing can compensate for the suffering and economic loss now felt by the region's peoples.

-Make sure that you have a good risk management plan in effect. Some of the worst damage occurred in hotels. That ought to serve as a wake-up call to many in the tourism industry. Have you asked yourself questions such as: Do you have evacuation plans? How will guests communicate to loved ones that they are safe? If you are in the US, what connections are there between Homeland Security, FEMA and your CVB? If you are outside of the USA, is your national tourism office connected with your specific government agencies?

_The New Orleans experience ought to serve to remind people in the first world just how dependent they are on services such as power plants, electricity and air conditioning. Tourism scholars and experts may want to review how big is too big concerning infrastructure. When thousands of people are housed in a hotel that has lost electricity, air conditioning and potable water it become all too clear how dependent the tourism industry is on these basic infrastructures. As an industry, we will need to review how hotels and attractions are built so there is a new balance developed between economic scales of efficiency and responsible tourism security

-Remember that all crises have a human element. The locations that suffered from the hurricane Katrina need to review what they should have done differently. While the Mississippi and Alabama Coasts are mainly sun 'n surf destinations, New Orleans is a major city, which functions not only around tourism but also around businesses, commerce and transportation. This crisis ought to teach us all how interrelated tourism is with these other industries. Tourism security is as much about developing plans to deal with both natural disasters as it is about developing plans to stop human-made disasters.

-The tourism industry needs to recognize that tourism surety is about both security and safety. Hurricane Katrina once again ought to have taught us that acceptable risk when it comes to human life is nothing more than gambling with people's lives and the very life

of the tourism industry. Any tourism community that does not have a well-trained tourism security unit ought not to be shocked when it loses its industry.

-There is a high priority for risk management techniques to be looked at from every angle. All too often, tourism surety is seen as adding nothing to the bottom line and plays second fiddle to marketing. This is a major mistake. Without tourism surety there is no bottom line!

-The tourism world must recognize that crisis management is often a manifestation of poor risk management. Much of the world's tourism industry is located in close proximity to the world's oceans, and another large portion of the world's tourism industry is located in seismic areas or areas that are prone to other natural disasters. That means that tourism conferences and leaders ought to be discussing preventative measures before a crisis occurs rather than after the crisis has taken place.

_ The tourism community needs to develop a cadre of experts who can help communities help themselves. New Orleans and the US Gulf Coast cannot recover on their own. Once the initial shock wave has worn off, as an international caring industry, tourism specialists should be working with the people of this region to help them not only rebuild, but to rebuild in a responsible and sustainable fashion.

To help here is a checklist of things we all need to review.

-Make sure the media tell the truth and provides accurate information

-Avoid media speculation

-Do not simply rebuild, but rebuild in a responsible and sustainable manner.

-Understand that we are working for "recovering " (a dynamic state) rather than "recovery" (a static state)

-Pay attention to the total recovery of both individuals and communities. Work toward their physical, mental, psychological and economic recovering

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tourism@bihs.net
 1-979-764-8402

-Be kind; remember that the people in these regions have suffered in ways in which we may never really understand.

Good crisis management, while essential, should never replace the need for good risk management. Major stadiums, large convention centers, and other facilities such as airport terminals need to review not only their own security needs, but also how they could be used to serve the greater community in case of a crisis. Here are a few suggestions that every community needs to have:

-Develop a community wide evacuation plan based on the disaster probabilities for your area. Disaster management should be viewed in the context of your climate, geography, topography and demographic needs. For example, in the case of New Orleans many people did not evacuate the city simply because they could not afford a full tank of gas!

Here are some things to consider in your evacuation plan of tourists

- Tourists tend to panic in crisis situations, especially if they are separated from family or friends.
- Tourists' families will also panic trying to find them
- Make sure to have instructions in more than one language
- Tourists may not be at the hotel when the crisis hits, that means that you may have to repeat information numerous times
- You may not be able to identify your visitors, what happens if the hotel loses its register?
- Tourists will have no emergency supplies with them.
- Airports are the first to close. Telling people to leave town when the airports are closed and they do not have a car, is worthless

- Tourists will get lost easily and do not know the evacuation routes

_Know your facility's internal and external weaknesses. For example, in the case of the superdome, the generators were in the basement, so when the building flooded, power was lost. Weaknesses should be judged against the risks scenarios developed for your location. Then have someone else check and challenge every plan that you have developed.

Just as in the case of tsunami, there are no words that can properly express the sympathies of the world to the people who have suffered from this major disaster. We, however, can learn from these tragedies and work so that in the future as an industry we can assure ourselves that we have done everything possible to provide a safe, secure and hassle free tourism experience.

Critical Risk Management Steps in Tourism and Event Security:

You need to know:

- How many people will be at the event/location?
- Are there one or multiple venues at the event/location?
- What are the event's/location's demographics and its demographic make-up?
- Is the location a normal event-staging place or used only from time to time?

Know:

- Your own persona strengths and weaknesses
- What is expected of you by your boss, the public and the media

Some of the key assumptions of tourism risk management

- There is no event that is 100% free of risk
- Risk management is statistical in nature. We are playing a probability game.
- To be away from home is to be insecure.
- Allocentric-risk is different than psychocentric-risk.
- All events are a volunteeristic activity; no one ever needs to go to an event.
- No guest ever has to return to your event.
- Most guests assume that you know something about safety and security.
- As world tension mounts, the demand for risk management increases.
- In risk management as in tourism, there is no distinction between security and safety.
- The further we travel from a crisis, the worse the crisis seems
- The further we are from a crisis, the longer it lasts in the collective memory
- Many visitors are highly unsophisticated when it comes to geography
- Visitors do not distinguish between one part of the event and another part. An error is an error.
- Different types of guests require different forms of risk management.
- Often as efficiency rises so does the risk
- As we script events and try to rationalize them, we discover that irrationalities often become part of the event.