

ACTION BRIEF

DESTINATION REPUTATION:

SEVERE WEATHER AND NATURAL DISASTERS

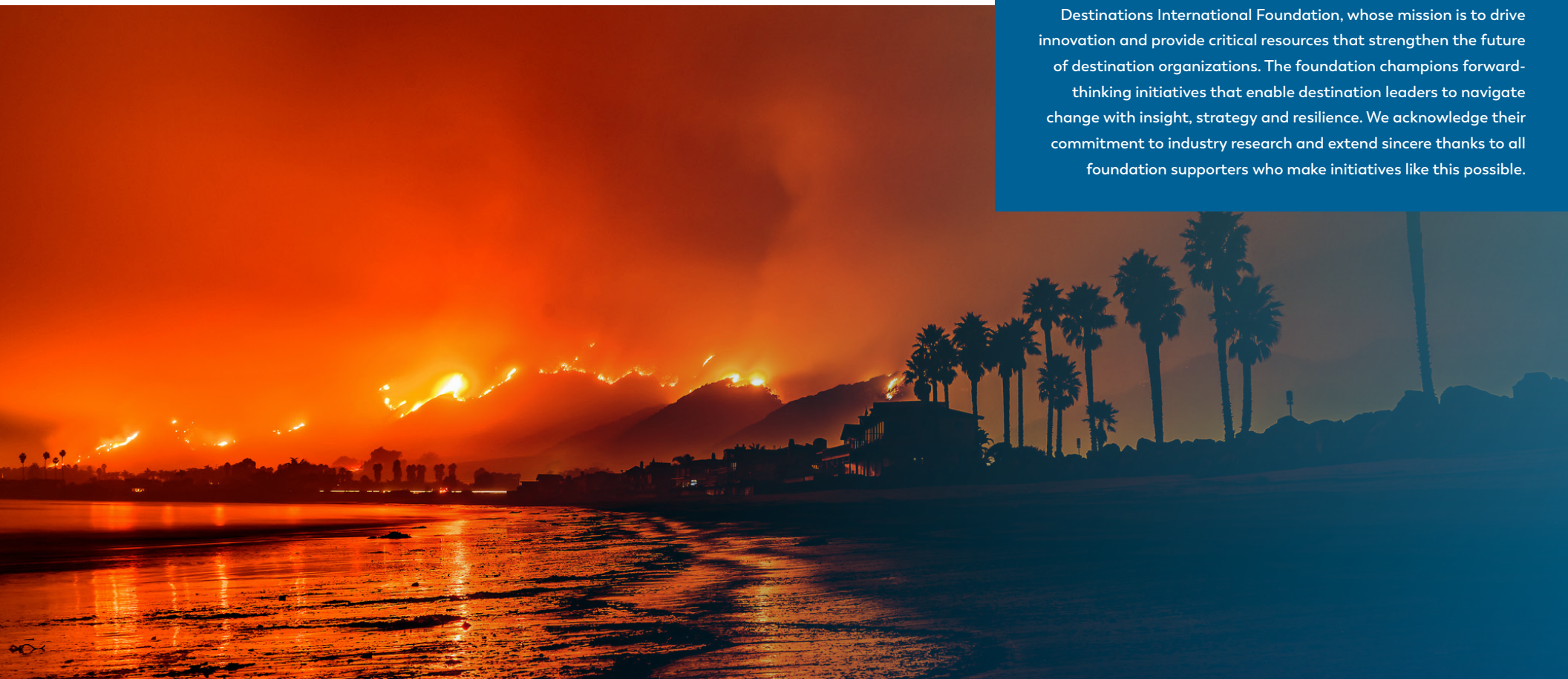
INTRODUCTION

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Severe weather events and natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires and winter storms, pose significant challenges for destinations. Travelers and meeting planners need confidence that a destination is prepared to handle emergencies with clear communication, proactive planning and resilience.

Destination organizations must be prepared to respond swiftly, ensuring visitor safety while minimizing disruptions to tourism and business continuity. This brief provides a structured approach to crisis messaging, stakeholder engagement and recovery strategies.

This research was made possible through the support of the Destinations International Foundation, whose mission is to drive innovation and provide critical resources that strengthen the future of destination organizations. The foundation champions forward-thinking initiatives that enable destination leaders to navigate change with insight, strategy and resilience. We acknowledge their commitment to industry research and extend sincere thanks to all foundation supporters who make initiatives like this possible.



SCENARIOS

The following scenarios illustrate real-world situations that destination organizations may encounter when addressing this issue. They are intended to provide context and practical insight into the key findings outlined in this brief.

1 SCENARIO

Major Storm Occurs Before a Signature Event

A hurricane, flood, wildfire or major snowstorm damages key infrastructure, hotels or transportation hubs shortly before a major convention or peak tourism season. Even if the event proceeds as scheduled, planners and visitors express concerns about accessibility, safety and recovery. In destinations facing recurring or climate-driven disruptions, questions also emerge about long-term resilience and the destination's readiness for future challenges.

2 SCENARIO

Insurance and Liability Concerns Impact Event Bookings

Following repeated weather incidents, event organizers raise questions about liability, cancellation policies and insurance protections when considering future events at the destination. Perceptions of operational risk increase even if the likelihood of future disasters remains statistically low.

3 SCENARIO

National or Global Media Coverage Amplifies Damage Perception

Media outlets heavily cover a severe weather event, often showing the most devastating images repeatedly. Even after cleanup and recovery, prospective visitors and planners continue to associate the destination with destruction, assuming conditions are worse than they are.



1. HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, ATTRACTIONS AND AIRPORTS

Preparedness and Safety Measures

- ◆ Reinforce that the destination has robust emergency response plans to protect visitors and ensure business continuity.
- ◆ Provide clear instructions to hospitality businesses on how to communicate with guests before, during and after severe weather events.
- ◆ Emphasize coordination with local emergency services to ensure rapid response and visitor safety.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Have we provided hotels, attractions and restaurants with standardized emergency response messaging?*
- ◆ *How are we ensuring that frontline staff are trained to answer visitors' concerns about safety?*
- ◆ *Are we proactively addressing traveler concerns in pre-arrival communications?*

Business Continuity Support

- ◆ Develop preparedness checklists for hospitality businesses, including data backups, securing outdoor areas, emergency power testing and guest relocation plans.
- ◆ Coordinate with businesses to ensure they have strategies in place for operations during severe weather and recovery efforts post-event.
- ◆ Establish a communication channel (e.g., email updates, WhatsApp groups) to provide real-time alerts and guidance to hospitality partners.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are hospitality businesses equipped with emergency preparedness toolkits?*
- ◆ *How are we supporting hotels and restaurants in managing disruptions and ensuring guest confidence?*
- ◆ *Do we have a system in place to assist businesses in accessing relief funds and operational support post-disaster?*

Consistent Guest Communication

- ◆ Ensure that hospitality partners deliver a unified message on safety protocols, shelter options and available resources.
- ◆ Draft template messages for businesses to customize and share with guests regarding safety measures and operational updates.
- ◆ Encourage businesses to provide real-time updates on available services and accommodations for affected travelers.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are all visitor-facing businesses aligned in their safety messaging to prevent confusion?*
- ◆ *How are we coordinating with hotels and attractions to ensure transparency in guest communications?*
- ◆ *Are we proactively sharing success stories of past resilience efforts to reinforce trust in our destination's preparedness?*

2. ELECTED OFFICIALS AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS

Crisis Coordination and Emergency Response

- ◆ Ensure that government and tourism leaders present a unified voice on public safety and travel guidance.
- ◆ Align with emergency management agencies to disseminate accurate, real-time information to residents and visitors.
- ◆ Maintain transparency about evacuation procedures, shelter locations and recovery timelines.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ Are we coordinating with emergency response teams to align public safety messaging with tourism updates?
- ◆ Do we have direct communication channels with government officials to relay visitor-specific concerns?
- ◆ How are we ensuring that tourism leaders are included in emergency response planning?

Economic Recovery and Infrastructure Support

- ◆ Advocate for emergency relief funding and expedited recovery efforts for tourism businesses.
- ◆ Communicate the role of tourism in the local economy and why rapid recovery benefits both residents and visitors.
- ◆ Work with officials to prioritize infrastructure restoration in tourism-heavy areas to facilitate reopening.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ Are we providing officials with data on tourism's economic impact to justify recovery investments?
- ◆ How are we working with policymakers to ensure tourism businesses have access to emergency funding?
- ◆ What strategies can we implement to accelerate the recovery of key visitor attractions and accommodations?

Unified Public Statements

- ◆ Coordinate public statements with government leaders to ensure a consistent narrative on safety, recovery and tourism readiness.
- ◆ Provide talking points to elected officials about the role of tourism in disaster response and economic stability.
- ◆ Ensure that official statements balance realism with optimism, reinforcing confidence in the destination's recovery efforts.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ Are we ensuring that government leaders have tourism-specific talking points during crisis updates?
- ◆ How do we align messaging to avoid conflicting information between tourism and emergency management agencies?
- ◆ Are we actively countering misinformation with factual, solution-oriented communication?

3. LOCAL BUSINESS LEADERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND RESIDENTS

Community Engagement and Public Safety

- ◆ Collaborate with local businesses, law enforcement and community groups to create a coordinated response plan.
- ◆ Ensure businesses and residents understand emergency procedures and the role of tourism in recovery efforts.
- ◆ Provide law enforcement with guidance on visitor engagement during crises to ensure safety and trust.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we engaging local businesses in tourism-focused emergency preparedness initiatives?*
- ◆ *How are we educating law enforcement on balancing public safety with visitor needs during crises?*
- ◆ *What strategies can we implement to keep residents informed about tourism's role in recovery efforts?*

Transparency and Crisis Communication

- ◆ Encourage businesses and residents to share accurate information rather than speculation during disasters.
- ◆ Offer media training for local business leaders to ensure consistent messaging on the destination's recovery progress.
- ◆ Develop social media toolkits to help community members amplify verified updates and counter misinformation.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we equipping local businesses and community members with the tools they need to communicate effectively?*
- ◆ *How are we leveraging local voices to reinforce destination messaging?*
- ◆ *Are we monitoring online conversations to address misinformation and concerns in real time?*

Infrastructure Resilience and Public Resource Coordination

- ◆ Work with city planners, emergency officials and utilities to strengthen infrastructure and prioritize visitor-facing areas in disaster planning.
- ◆ Promote investment in resilient transportation, communication and hospitality systems to ensure continuity during and after severe weather.
- ◆ Coordinate with public agencies to identify shelters, supply hubs and evacuation routes for residents and visitors.



Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we collaborating with local agencies to ensure tourism infrastructure is factored into resilience planning?*
- ◆ *How can we advocate for investments that protect both residents and the visitor economy from future climate-related risks?*
- ◆ *Are we prepared to help visitors navigate emergency services, shelter access, and transportation in times of crisis?*

NEXT STEPS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Next Steps

- ◆ Develop crisis communications with messaging templates for hospitality partners, government leaders and local businesses.
- ◆ Conduct emergency preparedness training for tourism stakeholders, focusing on visitor safety and business continuity.
- ◆ Establish a centralized digital hub for real-time updates on weather conditions, road closures and businesses reopening.
- ◆ Strengthen partnerships with emergency management agencies to ensure tourism considerations are factored into response planning.
- ◆ Launch post-disaster marketing initiatives to rebuild traveler confidence and promote recovery milestones.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ◆ Increase in hospitality partner participation in emergency preparedness programs.
- ◆ Reduction in visitor inquiries and concerns regarding safety due to proactive communication.
- ◆ Higher engagement rates on digital platforms providing real-time crisis updates.
- ◆ Improved response times in coordinating with emergency management agencies.
- ◆ Increase in economic recovery speed for tourism-related businesses post-disaster.
- ◆ Measurable improvements in community engagement and collaboration during crisis response.

Destinations that effectively manage severe weather and natural disasters demonstrate resilience, preparedness and leadership. By aligning tourism messaging with emergency response efforts, destination organizations can protect visitors, support local businesses and reinforce public confidence. Proactive planning, transparent communication, and a coordinated response among tourism partners, government officials and community stakeholders are key to ensuring a strong recovery. By implementing these strategies, destinations can maintain their reputation as safe, reliable places to visit, regardless of the challenges they face.

To understand more about this issue affecting your destination's reputation, learn more at:

<https://destinationsinternational.org/destination-reputation>



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was initiated and launched by Destinations International in collaboration with Future Partners. We are especially grateful to the Destinations International Foundation, whose support made this research possible.



About Destinations International

Destinations International is the world's largest and most respected resource for destination organizations, convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) and tourism boards. With more than 8,000 members and partners from over 750 destinations, the association represents a powerful forward-thinking and collaborative community around the world. For more information, visit destinationsinternational.org.

Future Partners

About Future Partners

Future Partners was founded by Dave Bratton and Erin Francis-Cummings in San Francisco, California, in 2003. It is a team of market researchers that work with over 250 organizations and travel brands around the U.S. and the world to provide insights and strategies that capture hearts, minds and market share. Future Partners connects human behavior and understanding to bring the future of travel within reach. For more information, visit futurepartners.com.



About the Destinations International Foundation

The Destinations International Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering destination organizations globally by providing education, research, advocacy and leadership development. The Foundation is classified as a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and all donations are tax-deductible. For more information, visit destinationsinternational.org/about-foundation.



DESTINATIONS
INTERNATIONAL