



## **Tourism Victoria's Bushfire Alert**

**22 December 2006**

### **Bushfire alert**

Summer 2006/07 is shaping up to be one of Victoria's most severe bushfire seasons. There are already significant fires in the north east and Gippsland, and many other parts of regional and outer metropolitan Victoria remain on high bushfire alert.

Hopefully your business will be unaffected, but it makes sense to be prepared. The following information is intended to help you manage your current and future bookings if your region is bushfire affected now or over the coming months.

### **What you can do**

#### *Reassurance and Being Positive*

Your website is the ideal way to inform existing and potential customers that you are open for business as normal, or temporarily closed. When making this decision, remember that you have a duty of care to your customers. Put yourself in their shoes and think about what they might want to do.

Also consider the visitor experience – you may be in a bushfire affected zone but not directly threatened by fire. An online message to this effect will reassure customers, but you may need to advise them, for example, that smoke is likely to restrict their sightseeing.

If you are staying open, reassure customers that it is currently safe to visit. If you do need to close, encourage customers to defer rather than cancel their booking.

Your customers will be anxious and are likely to have many questions:

- To protect your credibility adopt a policy of full disclosure about what is known and not known. These sites have current information on bushfires:
  - [www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au) – current fire situation and maps
  - [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) – closures to parks, roads, tracks, visitor sites and picnic areas
  - [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) – fire locations
  - [traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/trafficinfo/](http://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/trafficinfo/) - public road closures
  - [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au) – ABC radio is the official broadcaster for emergency warnings, fire updates and community information
- The backbone of your message to your customers must be factual information that is regularly updated.
- If some activities are restricted then research some alternatives. Check with your neighbours, local council and visitor information centre staff and come up with some ideas for your visitors and then brief staff to suggest these.
- Remember that today's visitors will be ambassadors for the region when they return home.

#### *Being Proactive*

Do not assume that silence means that your customers are happy. Take action now to reinforce the 'business as usual' message. Some useful things you can do to protect your business:

- Review your bookings and identify any that are particularly valuable.
- Prepare a message for your future bookings in letter, telephone script and web form.
- Identify the positive reasons why customers should still travel.
- Contact all your customers and tell them that you are looking forward to welcoming them.

- If you are affected by the bushfires and need to temporarily close, contact Tourism Victoria's support desk on 1300 306 366 for assistance with updating your listing on [visitvictoria.com](http://visitvictoria.com).
- For advice on cancellation policies visit [www.tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis](http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/crisis).

**What Tourism Victoria is doing**

Tourism Victoria is informing visitors, via [visitvictoria.com](http://visitvictoria.com), of areas that are safe to visit across the state. We are also working closely with industry through the Bushfire Response and Recovery Groups in Gippsland and the North East and the Strategic Response Group that will coordinate State Government liaison and guide the recovery process once the initial response phase has passed.

Based on the London Development Agency's *Guide to Crisis Management for Tourism Businesses*

**Christmas Wishes from Tourism Victoria**

Tourism Victoria would like to thank you for your support during 2006 and wish you and your families a very special and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

[Please click on the link to view our Christmas card.](#)

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**Corporate Site:** <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au>

**Consumer Site:** <http://www.visitvictoria.com>

