

Talking Points for Frontline Staff Around Storms/Fires in the Santa Barbara South Coast

INTERNAL NOTE: Please note that this document is intended for internal reference by the hospitality industry, especially for use on phone calls or with in-person customer inquiries. This is intended for use only if customers ask specifically about the past or potential fires, mudslides, storms, etc. and should not be volunteered out of context. It also should NOT be shared with news media.

*Please refer to the separate document, **Santa Barbara South Coast FAQs** in the Visit Santa Barbara Communications Toolkit, if you need a document that is shareable with the public.*

FOR USE DURING REGULAR CONDITIONS

What are conditions like in the Santa Barbara region right now?

The conditions are normal and Santa Barbara looks as beautiful as ever. The impacts from last year's mudslides and fire primarily were isolated to the remote mountains above Montecito and a handful of residential neighborhoods in the Montecito area not visible to most visitors. Fortunately, all other Santa Barbara South Coast cities, including Santa Barbara, Goleta and Summerland, were NOT affected.

All hotels, restaurants and attractions in these cities have been open for business, and all of the businesses in Montecito have reopened except San Ysidro Ranch, which is expected to reopen in spring 2019. In fact, *Travel + Leisure* named Montecito a [Best Place to Visit in 2019](#).

If I go to Santa Barbara, will I have a pleasant experience?

DURING EXPECTED GOOD WEATHER:

Conditions are normal and the experience is expected to be very pleasant right now throughout the region. Downtown Santa Barbara's signature skyline—surrounded by beautiful beaches and green-and-gold tinted mountains—are as inviting as ever. The streets and coastline are clean, and people are out enjoying beach activities, water sports, shopping, dining, wine tasting, gallery hopping and more.

What caused the mudslides in Montecito?

The Jan. 9 mudslides/debris flow were an extremely rare, unprecedented event. They took place in the town of Montecito, Calif., located 5 miles east of the city of Santa Barbara, and were caused by an unusual combination of factors. First, the historic Thomas Fire burned areas of the mountains behind Montecito (not currently visible) in December 2017. Then what experts have called a rare, "200-year" event—an unusually concentrated rainfall—took place directly over the burn scar on Jan. 9, triggering debris flows and mudslides. More than half an inch of rain fell in 5 minutes.

Are mudslides/debris flows likely to happen again?

Although mudslides occasionally can happen on California's coast during heavy rains, Santa Barbara County officials have taken a proactive approach to mitigate the impact should they happen again in the county.

Are fires likely to happen again?

Majestic forests are a big part of what draws visitors to states like California. Although wildfires can occasionally happen in any area with dense forests, government and safety officials have taken a proactive approach to mitigate the impact should they happen here, such as inspecting high-risk areas during unusually dry weather, clearing away brush and providing guidelines to businesses and homeowners to reduce risk.

FOR USE DURING ANTICIPATED STORM/FIRE CONDITIONS

REGIONAL QUESTIONS (FOR HOTEL SAFETY, SEE BELOW)

What are conditions like in the Santa Barbara region right now?

Businesses and properties in Santa Barbara, Goleta, Summerland and Montecito [edit as needed to fit region] are open and continuing to welcome visitors. Those planning to stay in [city, if any, affected by storm/fires] should check with their hotel for specific information on its status. Visitors are encouraged to read the latest travel information and any advisories and recommendations on Visit Santa Barbara's website, <https://santabarbaraca.com>.

What hotels and attractions are open or closed?

The majority [or all—edit depending on situation] of hotels and attractions are open for business throughout the Santa Barbara South Coast. Only [number] hotels in [city affected] are currently closed (out of nearly a hundred on the South Coast). For the latest road and tourism business closures, go to Visit Santa Barbara's website <https://santabarbaraca.com/travel>.

If I go to Santa Barbara, will I have a pleasant experience?

DURING POTENTIAL INCLEMENT WEATHER:

We recommend you go to Visit Santa Barbara's website, <https://santabarbaraca.com>, for everything you need to know to make an informed assessment, such as weather and road conditions, any closures, as well as alternative activity recommendations. Santa Barbara County is nearly 4,000 square miles, so while conditions may be unfavorable in one area, other areas may be completely unaffected and very pleasant.

How do visitors find out more information should an evacuation/mudslide/fire occur?

IF A TOURIST IS CALLING FROM SANTA BARBARA AND THERE IS AN EVACUATION IN THEIR AREA:

To ensure your safety, please check with your hotel for evacuation plans so they can assist you with alternative accommodation arrangements.

You can also check the travel advisory page on Visit Santa Barbara's website

<https://santabarbaraca.com/travel> for more information on the latest road closures, weather updates[, air quality, if a fire] and alternative activity recommendations.

IF A TOURIST IS CALLING FROM SANTA BARBARA AND THERE IS NO EVACUATION IN THEIR AREA:

We always recommend that visitors already in town during a major storm [or wildfire if applicable] check with their hotel about the latest forecasts and any recommendations.

You can also check the travel advisory page on Visit Santa Barbara's website

<https://santabarbaraca.com/travel> for more information on the latest road closures, weather updates [air quality, if a fire] and alternative activity recommendations.

Should I come to Santa Barbara? [IF TOURIST IS CALLING FROM OUTSIDE SANTA BARBARA]

To help you make your decision, we recommend a couple of things:

- 1) If you have a hotel reservation coming within the next few days, we suggest you check with your hotel about the latest forecasts and any recommendations for that specific area. Santa Barbara County is nearly 4,000 square miles, so while some areas might be impacted by any given storm [or fire], many others may be unaffected.
- 2) You can also check the travel advisory page on Visit Santa Barbara's website <https://santabarbaraca.com/travel> for more information on the latest road closures, weather updates and alternative activity recommendations.

What would you do if you were me?

"I can't answer that for you, but to make an informed decision, I'd recommend calling the hotel and consulting Visit Santa Barbara's website, as the information is designed to accurately portray the latest conditions and forecasts."

IF A LOCAL RESIDENT IS CALLING:

Residents can go to www.ReadySBC.org to find information about storm evacuation plans, a 72-hour storm evacuation timeline and an interactive map for Santa Barbara County. When available, a list of hotels offering evacuee rates will be posted on Visit Santa Barbara's website at <https://santabarbaraca.com/evacuees>.

HOTEL SAFETY

Is this hotel safe for my family to stay at?

FOR GUESTS ALREADY AT HOTEL:

DURING POTENTIAL INCLEMENT WEATHER:

Currently there are no advisories or evacuation orders in place. However, your safety is our top priority, so should conditions change, we will notify you immediately and assist you with alternate plans.

OR

DURING EXPECTED INCLEMENT WEATHER [OR WILDFIRES]:

Your safety is our top priority, and right now we are working with public safety officials to get the latest information and recommendations. We will get back to all our guests very shortly with updates as well as any recommendations and alternative plans if needed.

We recommend you refer to Visit Santa Barbara's website for the latest information on weather conditions, road closures[, air quality if it's a fire] and alternate activity recommendations across Santa Barbara County, <https://santabarbaraca.com/travel>. (Note for hotel staff: We recommend you offer them the use of the hotel business computer if they need it.)

FOR GUESTS WHO ARE NOT YET AT THE HOTEL BUT ARRIVING WITHIN THE WEEK:

DURING POTENTIAL INCLEMENT WEATHER:

You called the right place. Currently there are no advisories or evacuation orders in place. However, your safety is our top priority, so should conditions change, we will notify you immediately via the contact information we have. May I verify the contact information we have for you?

OR

DURING EXPECTED INCLEMENT WEATHER [OR WILDFIRES]:

Guests' safety is our top priority, and right now we are working with public safety officials to get the latest information and recommendations. We will get back to all our guests who have reservations in the coming days very shortly so you have the information you need to decide what you'd like to do. May I verify the contact information we have for you?

MEDIA INQUIRIES

If a reporter calls with questions about the region or tourism impact, always refer them to Visit Santa Barbara's PR department and Director of Communications Karna Hughes (805) 966-9222 x112 or karna@santabarbaraca.com.

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