



Holding Statements Templates

INTRODUCTION

Holding statements are a powerful tool used at the start of a crisis to assure interest holders that you're aware of the current situation and your organization is taking action.

A well-crafted holding statement with clear and concise information will prevent speculation, buy time to gather information, and help maintain your organization's reputation.

To ensure your organization can activate your holding statement quickly, holding statements can be drafted in advance and revised during a crisis with the current facts.

Holding statements are generally used by the Lead organization in a crisis; however, they can be used by other organizations impacted by a large-scale event, such as a wildfire or flood.

WHEN TO USE

A holding statement should be activated immediately after an organization becomes aware of the crisis. Use a holding statement to:

- Respond to media and interest holders' requests for comments and/or information on a crisis. This is especially useful at the start of a crisis when you don't have all the details.
- Reassure staff, partners, and/or visitors that you're aware of the situation and taking it seriously.
- Buy time to gather more information and develop an action plan for response.
- Allow for time to coordinate an official crisis response with key partners (if applicable).

The FEARP Formula

Use the FEARP Formula as a framework for developing your holding statements. This formula will ensure you are sharing the right information in the order of importance to your audience.



FACTS Share what you know right now.



EMPATHY Acknowledge concern and respect for human impacts.



ACTION Outline what you're doing in response.



REASSURANCE Remind people of your capabilities or partnerships.



PROTECT Provide guidance to protect both your destination reputation and interest holders.

Examples

Below is a fictional example of a holding statement for a tourism organization (Visit Our Town) experiencing wildfires in their area, aligned with the FEARP formula.

Facts	Visit Our Town is aware of the wildfire burning in the ABC area and the potential threat to our community.
Empathy	The safety of our community and visitors is our top priority.
Action	We are working closely with our municipal, regional and provincial partners to monitor the situation and prepare the appropriate response.
Reassurance	As a dedicated partner in our community, we will do everything we can to support emergency response where needed. We are preparing nearby accommodation sites if evacuation is required.
Protect	We ask that visitors remain clear of the ABC area and follow the instructions of emergency responders. For more information, and the most recent updates, visit our website. [Include link]

Below is an example from the Central Okanagan Emergency Operations Centre in response to a wildfire sparking in their community. This demonstrates how a holding statement can be shortened and reused on social media.



USING AI TO HELP GENERATE A STATEMENT

Everyday AI is advancing and becoming a more powerful tool that can easily support a communications response in an emergency, potentially saving essential minutes or seconds to get information out more quickly.

Using an AI model of choice, e.g. ChatGPT, CoPilot, Gemini etc. you can quickly insert the FEARP template, the key facts of the crisis, and a link to your Know Before You Go website and ask AI to develop your holding statement, and to then format that holding statement for your communication channels, e.g. social media, email newsletter, etc.

Using AI, however, requires due diligence and should be used with caution. AI models frequently “hallucinate” meaning that rather than admitting it needs more information or doesn’t have all the facts, it will invent information.

Some tips on using AI:

Carefully Review & Always Edit	Always review the content it produces for accuracy and edit as needed. Although it is a good starting point, you know your brand voice best.	Review Translations	If using as a translation tool, have someone who is fluent in the language review the content for accuracy.
Ensure Brand Alignment	Review to confirm it reflects your authentic brand voice and remains consistent with your overall messaging and values.	Remove AI Giveaways	AI is known to overuse some features, specifically em-dashes and emojis. Remove or reduce the usage of those two key AI giveaways.
Spell Check	Check spelling and ensure content is in English (Canadian).	Check Hashtags	AI can invent new hashtags rather than choosing current hashtags or ones from previous crises.



TEMPLATE

Practice & Prepare Your Holding Statements

This template contains a practice scenario for you to complete a holding statement, as well as a blank section to practice with your own scenario.

Practice Scenario

Your community is surrounded by beautiful natural landscapes, including mountains, rolling hills, and world-renowned backcountry camping. As the local Destination Management Organization, you are often promoting exploring local outdoor amenities.

A young visitor came into the Visitor Information Centre on Tuesday morning, requesting information about one of the more difficult backcountry trails. Your team provided the visitor with all the information needed, and the visitor headed out on their trip.

On Thursday afternoon, you received a phone call from the local media requesting a statement. You're notified that the visitor was injured while hiking, and since they came to the Visitor Information Centre and talked to your team, they are blaming your organization for their injury, claiming your team did not make the difficulty of the trail clear to them.

You inform the media that you will get back to them, and immediately start drafting a holding statement.



TIP! Keep Information Private

Information you put into AI isn't protected; be careful what you share about your organization or partner organizations. Check your settings for each platform and review their privacy policies to ensure you use the tool appropriately. It is recommended to turn off AI model learning features, so your information isn't used to teach the model and distributed to others.



TEMPLATE

Given the information available in the scenario above, create a holding statement using the template below.

ELEMENT

YOUR RESPONSE

FACTS

What do you
know right now?

EMPATHY

Who is affected and how
do you acknowledge that?

ACTION

What are you
doing in response?

REASSURANCE

Why should interest
holders trust you?

PROTECT

What should
people do next?

Where can they
get information?

Real Scenario

Refer back to the [Crisis Planning Scenario Worksheet](#) where you brainstormed potential scenarios your organization may face. Keep those scenarios grouped together by type (e.g. political, natural, human-made, etc.) and create a sample holding statement for every scenario. Save these in a handy location to access and revise during a crisis.

Your Scenario



TEMPLATE

Holding Statement

ELEMENT	YOUR RESPONSE
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FACTS What do you know right now?	
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EMPATHY Who is affected and how do you acknowledge that?	
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TEMPLATE

ELEMENT

YOUR RESPONSE

ACTION

What are you
doing in response?

REASSURANCE

Why should interest
holders trust you?

PROTECT

What should people
do next?

Where can they
get information?