OC Strong & United

2021 June Toolkit

To our Ocean City Business Community:

With spring now in full swing and the start of summer on the horizon, we are very much looking forward to the months ahead and welcoming visitors to Ocean City.

Gearing up for peak season also means being prepared for challenges our community may face this year. At the beginning of March, we shared Phase One of the 2021 **OC Strong & United** toolkit to provide you with communications strategies and best practices to ensure you feel supported, and so we can all partner together to give our visitors the best Ocean City experience possible. Phase Two of the **OC Strong & United** toolkit, features information from Phase One, as well as new and expanded resources, including:

- Reputation Management & Expectation Guidelines
- Social Media Management & Expectations Guidelines
- Best Practices for Our Business Community
- Updated External Talking Points
- Internal Talking Points
- Social Media Best Practices

The **OC Strong & United** toolkit will continue to evolve as summer draws nearer, so please stay tuned for updates. If you have any feedback regarding additional tools that would be helpful to you and other businesses, please reach out to Jessica Waters at JWaters@oceancitymd.gov.

Thank you to those of you who attended the Tourism Partners seminar and thank you very much for all that you do to make Ocean City such an amazing community. By continuing to work together, we can keep **Ocean City Strong & United**!

Sincerely,

Jessica Waters

Jessica Waters, Town of Ocean City

Glenn Irwin

Glenn Irwin, OCDC

Melanie Pursel

Melanie Pursel, Worcester

Susan Jones

Susan Jones, HMRA

Lachelle Scarlato

Lachelle Scarlato, OC Chamber

Reputation Management & Expectation Guidelines

Between the news media's 24-hour cycle and the influence of social media on consumers' perspectives, it's essential that Ocean City and its business community work together to create a positive narrative about our beloved beach town. Despite facing tremendous challenges in June of 2020, our community banded together to form a strong and united partnership between the public and private sectors with one goal in mind: protecting our residents and visitors, while also preserving our family image.

Included throughout this toolkit below are reputation management strategies and community expectation guidelines for how business owners can help promote Ocean City in the best way possible. If we work together, we will truly stay Strong & United.

- **History doesn't lie – so remember, it's June**. During certain times of the year, particularly in June, Ocean City historically sees a spike in crime and disorderly behavior. During these situations and incidents, it's important that the Ocean City Police Department (OCPD) and Town of Ocean City control the message. This doesn't mean that something has changed or that our town is out of control; it simply means that for a number of reasons, June draws a younger demographic to our resort town. However, for more than a decade, crime has trended downward after July 1 each year, and Ocean City begins to draw in more family visitors.

- **OCPD and the Town of Ocean City must be transparent.** "Hiding" incidents or high-profile public events isn't possible in 2021. Cell phone images and videos are often already circulating on social media and the traditional news sites before officers can even respond to the scene in some cases. To dispel rumors or misinformation, the OCPD and Town will share updates with news media or on social media regarding disorderly behavior, arrests and other incidents. Releasing public information helps prevent the spread of rumors that may circulate, particularly on social media. This also helps the OCPD gain public trust and allows the community to see its efforts in enforcing the laws.

- **Knowledge is power.** Keep your employees informed about what's going on and prepare them with how to answer tough questions. You can reference the Internal and External Talking Points *(found inside of this toolkit)* to address the frequently asked questions you may be receiving from employees and customers at this time.

- **Remember, we never want to create or spread our own bad news.** In order to do this, we want to prevent the spread of rumors and misinformation. While June is a very challenging time for all of us – and brings a younger demographic (versus family visitors) and an increase in crime – **June does not define Ocean City.** We all know what a fantastic place to live, work and visit that Ocean City is – so don't let a few isolated incidents destroy our incredible resort town. Should you receive any inquiries from news media about disorderly behavior/criminal activity in town, please direct the reporter to OCPD Deputy Communications Manager Ashley Miller at (410) 520-5395. For any other media inquiries, please direct the reporter to Ocean City Communications Manager Jessica Waters at (410) 289-8967.

- **Stay tuned.** We will continue to provide you with timely updates to key resources as needed to help ensure Ocean City and our businesses have a successful 2021.

Social Media Reputation Management & Expectation Guidelines

When disorderly behavior, arrests and other incidents take place, it is essential that the OCPD, Town and business community work together effectively. We all want residents, employees and visitors to feel safe in Ocean City, and social media plays a big role in the town's overall image. Outlined below are **social media best practices and recommendations** for how businesses can help support OCPD and Town efforts for our community to remain Strong & United.

- **OCPD and the Town of Ocean City share updates on social media for a reason.** As mentioned in the general reputation management guidelines, releasing public information on social media regarding disorderly behavior, arrests and other incidents helps prevent the spread of misinformation, and this transparency also helps increase the public's trust in the OCPD. It isn't possible to "hide" incidents that occur in Ocean City, so it's best for OCPD and the Town to control the message and provide the public with the facts.

- **Don't add fuel to the fire.** When negative incidents and situations occur in Ocean City, you can support the OCPD and Town by helping to mitigate the spread of rumors on social media. Avoid engaging with users' negative comments and questions about incidents that occur in town and instead, direct them to the official source, which for matters related to crime is the OCPD. Included on the following pages are examples of potential scenarios and the OCPD's social media/public relations response, as well as how businesses can best respond.

- **Establish a social media policy for employees to follow** to prevent the spread of misinformation or any posts that could put your business in a negative light, and ensure all staff members are aware of the guidelines.

- **Continue to positively promote Ocean City through your social media channels.** Your customers are your biggest "fans" and they will believe what you say! Now is a great time to remind visitors why they should plan a vacation in Ocean City this year by sharing upbeat messaging, exciting updates about your business, and eye-catching positive imagery on your channels. Refer to the General Social Media Best Practices *(found inside of this toolkit)* for some helpful tips for strengthening your business' online presence.
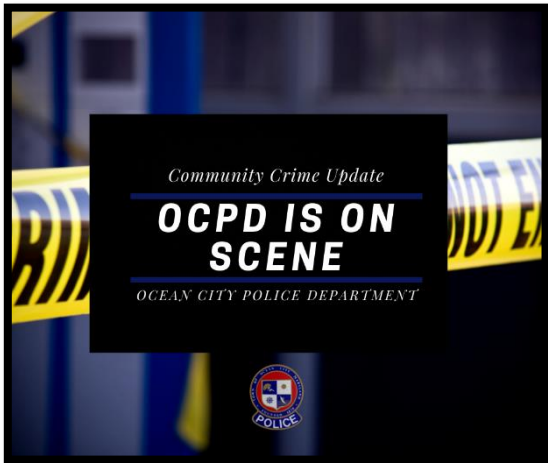
OC Strong & United

What to Expect:

OCPD Sample Social Media Posts

& News Releases

Potential Incident/Scenario:

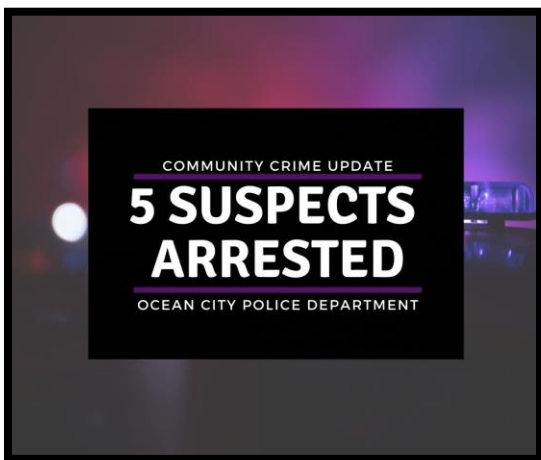Large Fight, Stabbing, Assault, Shooting or Other On-Scene Investigation

Potential Social Media Post by OCPD or Town:

Ocean City Police Department: The Ocean City Police Department is on the scene of a _stabbing_ in the area of _10th Street and the Boardwalk_. One person has been transported by EMS to _Atlantic General Hospital_ with non-life-threatening injuries. One suspect is in custody. The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with information is asked contact the _Criminal Investigations Division_ at _410-520-5136_. Anonymous tips can also be left at https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/departments/police/crime-tips/. #YourOCMDPD #OCPDServingandProtecting

Potential Incident/Scenario:

Follow-Up from High Profile Cases

Potential Social Media Post by OCPD or Town:

Ocean City Police Department: Ocean City Police have arrested and charged _5 suspects_ with disorderly conduct/various criminal offenses following a large fight that occurred on the Boardwalk on _June 3, 2021_. The investigation into this incident is ongoing, and anyone who witnessed the incident and can provide any information is asked to contact OCPD at crimetips@oceancitymd.gov or 410-723-6604. Anonymous tips can also be submitted at https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/departments/police/crime-tips/ or by calling 410-520-5136. #YourOCMDPD

#OCPDServingandProtecting

*** Note: underline/italics indicates portions that change depending on the specific situation. ***

Key Messages and/or Talking Points for Customer Questions:

1. Ocean City Police responded to an isolated incident on the Boardwalk.
2. June is historically a time when high school graduates and young adults visit Ocean City, leading to an increase in disorderly behavior that typically subsides after June.
3. Ocean City is a great destination for families and is safe to visit all year long.
4. Officers will be strictly enforcing all laws and ordinances, and the OCPD will continue to be vigilant as always.

Social Media Best Practices for Businesses:

- **If you are going to share information about the incident, only share OCPD or Town's social media post.** This helps build trust and assures the most accurate information is being released.
- **DO NOT** share or reshare negative videos and photos of criminal activity.
- Use positive hashtags to support OCPD #YourOCMDPD #OCPDServingandProtecting
- Should you receive questions or comments on your business' social media channels, **direct users to the OCPD to help mitigate the spread of rumors.** Below is sample language you can use:
    - *Hi [NAME]- The Ocean City Police Department updates its social media page regularly. We recommend that you follow its social media sites or reach out directly with questions.*
    OR
    - *Hi [NAME]- This situation was addressed by the Ocean City Police Department in this post [INSERT LINK TO POST].*
- If you receive any inquiries from news media about the incident, please direct the reporter to OCPD Deputy Communications Manager Ashley Miller at (410) 520-5395.
- For general inquiries from customers about safety in Ocean City, you and your employees can reference the Internal and External Talking Points (found inside of this toolkit).

OCPD Sample Press Release: General Arrests/Crime Follow-Up

Media contact:
Ashley Miller
Deputy Communications Manager
O: 410.520.5395 | C: 443.235.4420

Ocean City Police Continue to Make Arrests for June Crime

OCEAN CITY, MD – (June XX, 2021): The Ocean City Police Department has worked thoroughly to identify and arrest suspects in recent assaults and unruly activity. Two examples of recent arrests include the seizure of a firearm and a separate case for a first-degree assault. The information on these cases are below:

Seizure of an AK-47 Firearm: On June XX, 2021, Ocean City Police located a city ordinance violation involving several subjects sleeping in a motor vehicle. Upon contacting the occupants, officers detected the odor of marijuana. The officers also learned one of the subjects had an active arrest warrant out of Harrisburg, PA for discharging a firearm into an occupied structure. Officers began searching the vehicle and located bullet holes in the rear tailgate of the vehicle. Officers also located marijuana, a Glock 23 .40 caliber handgun, and a Century Arms Micro Draco 7.62 x 39 mm pistol (assault style handgun).

The following suspects were arrested:

- NAME, AGE, HOMETOWN, CHARGES
- NAME, AGE, HOMETOWN, CHARGES
- NAME, AGE, HOMETOWN, CHARGES

Suspect Arrested for First Degree Assault (Stabbing): At around 3:30 a.m. on June XX, 2021, the Ocean City Police Department received a call from Peninsula Regional Medical Center advising they were treating a victim of a stabbing that occurred in Ocean City. The initial investigation revealed a verbal altercation escalated into a physical altercation. During the physical altercation, the victim was hit with a stun gun, stabbed, and stomped by multiple suspects. Further investigation revealed the identity of the suspect, a 21 year-old male from Lebanon, PA who was placed under arrest on June XX, 2021 for first-degree assault, second-degree assault, and reckless endangerment. The victim is expected to make a full recovery from this incident.

Potential Incident/Scenario:

Any incident where police are seeking suspects and/or victims.

Potential Social Media Post by OCPD or Town:

Ocean City Police Department: The Ocean City Police Department is seeking the public's assistance in locating the victim(s) and suspect(s) in an assault. The assault, which was captured in a video that has been circulating on social media, occurred at _2 a.m._ in the area of _4th Street and the Boardwalk_. Anyone who witnessed the assault or who can provide any information as to the identity of the suspects or victim, is asked to contact OCPD at crimetips@oceancitymd.gov or by calling 410-520-5136. #YourOCMDPD #CommunityCollaboration

*** _Note: underline/italics indicates portions that change depending on the specific situation._ ***

Key Messages and/or Talking Points for Customer Questions:

1. If you see something, say something. If you witness any suspicious activity or a criminal act in progress, call 911 immediately.
2. Reporting incidents immediately allows emergency first responders the ability to arrive quicker and deescalate the incident.
3. The public's assistance can be key in solving and preventing crime and unruly behavior.

Below is a template example of a press release that the Town of Ocean City or Ocean City Police Department may distribute after an incident in Ocean City:

OCPD Sample Press Release: Seeking Public's Assistance

Media contact:
Ashley Miller
Deputy Communications Manager
O: 410.520.5395 | C: 443.235.4420

Ocean City Police Asking for Public's Assistance Identifying Victim(s) & Suspect(s) in Boardwalk Assault(s) During Large Fight

OCEAN CITY, MD – (June XX, 2021): Ocean City Police are seeking the public's assistance in locating the suspects and victim in an assault that occurred on Sunday. The assault, which was captured in a viral video on social media, occurred at approximately 11 p.m. in the area of 4th Street and the Boardwalk. At this time, the assault has NOT been reported to the police.

The preliminary investigation revealed the suspect, a tall white male, assaulted two victims. The suspect was wearing a dark colored T-shirt, torn knee length denim shorts and white tennis shoes. The suspect, and at least one accomplice, then fled the scene and have not been located by police.

Anyone who witnessed the assault or who can provide any information as to the identity of the suspect or his accomplices, is asked to contact Ocean City Police Detective NAME at EMAIL@oceancitymd.gov or 410-520-5390. Anonymous tips can also be left at https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/departments/police/crime-tips/ or by calling 410-520-5136.

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Potential Incident/Scenario:

Pedestrian Collision and/or Traffic Collision
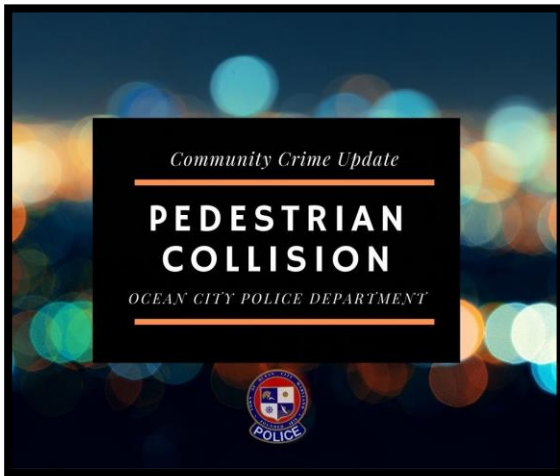
Potential Social Media Post by OCPD or Town:

Ocean City Police Department: OCPD ON THE SCENE: The Ocean City Police Department is investigating a pedestrian collision that occurred *at 10:45 p.m. this evening in the area of 94th Street and Coastal Highway*. The victim was treated by Ocean City EMS and has been transported to *Atlantic General Hospital* with *life-threatening injuries*. Traffic is being diverted and delays should be expected in the area. This investigation is ongoing. #YourOCMDPD

*** Note: underline/italics indicates portions that change depending on the specific situation. ***

Key Messages and/or Talking Points for Customer Questions:

1. **Walk smart.** Always cross the street at corners, marked crosswalks, and intersections. That's where drivers expect to see you. Traffic signals and signs will ensure you have the right of way and can cross safety. Do not jaywalk.
2. **Watch for turning vehicles:** Look left, right, and left again before you cross. Always make eye contact with drivers. If you're unsure whether they see you, wait.
3. **Always keep your eyes up.** Stay alert and stay safe when crossing.

Below is a template example of a press release that the Town of Ocean City or Ocean City Police Department may distribute after an incident in Ocean City:

OCPD Sample Press Release: Pedestrian Collision

Media contact:
Ashley Miller
Deputy Communications Manager
O: 410.520.5395 | C: 443.235.4420

Ocean City Police Investigating Fatal Pedestrian Collision

OCEAN CITY, MD – (June XX, 2021): The Ocean City Police Department is currently investigating a fatal pedestrian collision that occurred overnight on Monday, June XX, 2021, at approximately 12:08 a.m. at 19th Street and Baltimore Avenue.

The pedestrian, NAME, AGE, HOME TOWN, was crossing Baltimore Avenue in the crosswalk. The vehicle that struck the victim was traveling southbound on Baltimore Avenue at the time of the collision. Lifesaving efforts were initiated by the Worcester County Sheriff's Department and Ocean City EMS. NAME was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver of the vehicle remained on scene. The driver has been identified as NAME, AGE, HOME TOWN

The Ocean City Police Department's Traffic Safety Unit is handling the investigation, which is ongoing at the time of this release. Preliminary investigation determined that alcohol, drugs and speed were not contributing factors to the collision. There are currently no charges pending.

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Social Media Best Practices

Social Media Best Practices

Social media has become one of the most influential forces in consumers' decision-making behaviors. For the tourism industry in particular, social media has completely changed how users research a destination, compare accommodations, plan activities and determine "must-try" dining experiences. It's incredibly important Ocean City and its businesses work together to create a more positive narrative.

Using the following social media best practices will help you strengthen your business's online presence and help showcase the unique, fun, family-friendly vacation that can only be found in Ocean City.

Keep it Positive + Upbeat

- **Every business plays a significant role in the OC vacation experience.** The fun times and great memories your business creates for visitors should be reflected in your tone in both content and responses to customer comments.

Share Relevant Content Often

- **Share content often and consistently** to keep customers engaged, informed and interested in your business.
- **Keep content relevant** to the business and customer experience.
- **Share fun insights, happy moments and exciting updates** to remind all of your customers, even those not currently in OC, why they feel connected to your business and choose to follow you online.
- **Avoid posting anything that could be perceived as controversial.** Be aware and sensitive to the news of today, and refrain from posting content that could spark negative debate or commentary.

Incorporate Highly Visual Images

- **Regularly share engaging and eye-catching shots** that focus on customers' favorite experiences or products from your business.
  - If photography isn't your strong suit, see if you have someone on staff who can help!

Utilize User-Generated Content (UGC)

- **Visitors love to share photos of their vacations and fun experiences on social media, and typically tag the businesses featured.** Share these photos regularly to create a connection with the community and provide future visitors with a glimpse into a real Ocean City vacation.
  - If you're tagged in engaging Instagram Stories by a customer, share them to your own Stories so that followers can experience authentic content being created in real-time.
  - Encourage users to submit their photos featuring your business to build your UGC library and engage directly with loyal customers.
  - If you decide to share UGC, be sure to give photo credit to the user that submitted or posted the photo.

○ While it's great to inform followers of ongoing promotions, be careful not to overwhelm followers with too many promotional messages.

Monitor Pages + Be Responsive

- **Be sure to check your pages for new questions, comments and messages often.** Treat these interactions as opportunities to build customer loyalty, gain future patrons and turn any negative experiences into a positive one.
- **The interactions you have with customers are not only a reflection of your business, but Ocean City as well.** It's important to demonstrate the town's inviting nature and family-friendly atmosphere.
    - ○ When you receive a positive comment, acknowledge the customer to let them know you appreciate their feedback with something like, "So glad you enjoyed it!" or "Hearing this made our day. Thanks for stopping by!"
    - ○ If someone posts a negative comment about your business, products/services, avoid sounding defensive, unconvinced, irritated or insincere in your response. Maintain a professional approach and direct the conversation off the main channel with a response like, "So sorry to hear that! Mind sending us a private message with your contact information so we can address this?"
    - ○ Should you receive a negative comment or question about the town or its status, reference the provided FAQs sheet for information and recommended responses.
- **Maintain a professional page by responding to customer comments and posting content as the business page as opposed to your personal page.** This will prevent you from communicating with customers from your personal profile.

- **Even the most loved businesses will be forced to deal with questionable comments or posts from users.** When relevant to your business they should be addressed directly. However, you should consider hiding or removing them if they are:
    - ○ Spam – Posts that include unrelated or unfamiliar links that may direct users to sites with viruses or malware.
    - ○ Irrelevant content – Posts that are not related to your business and would not be of any interest to your audience.
    - ○ Inappropriate content or language – This includes explicit language, sexual content, racist, sexist or homophobic comments.

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Business Best Practices

Business Best Practices

In gearing up for the 2021 peak season, the Town of Ocean City is doing everything it can to prevent and prepare for the difficult circumstances our town often faces during the summer months, particularly in June. Our **OC Strong & United** Team has provided the following safety recommendations on how Ocean City's wonderful hotels, motels and other businesses can help ensure that our community remains Strong & United this year.

General Crime Prevention Tips:

- **Sign up for the Trespass Enforcement Authorization Program (TEAP).** TEAP is intended for businesses that close (such as restaurants and retail) and gives the police the authority to enforce trespassing on the property when the owner/designee is not present.

- **Consider hiring security personnel and/or establish a "Business Owner Designee."** During the times of the year when Ocean City experiences increases in disorderly behavior, having 24-hour on-site security and/or an on-site "Business Owner Designee" is helpful. The Business Owner Designee needs to be a decision-maker and easily identified as security personnel or a representative of the business. This point person from the business should also serve as a liaison with the OCPD when assistance from law enforcement is needed.

- **Install security cameras throughout your property to deter crime, and post signs identifying that security cameras are in use.** Ensure all cameras are in working order and that you have the ability to provide police with immediate access to footage in the event that unlawful behavior takes place on your property.

- **Participate in the OCDC Downtown Lighting Program.** In 2018, the Ocean City Development Corporation (OCDC) started its Downtown Lighting program to

bring energy-efficient LED lighting to alleys in the downtown area to increase safety for Ocean City residents, visitors and staff. The OCDC provides a match of up to $500 for businesses and property owners to install such lighting. This lighting not only helps in public safety but also improves the visibility for pedestrians and bicyclists, who often use these alleyways to get around downtown.

To learn more about OCDC's Downtown Lighting program and to apply for a grant to help install LED lighting, please visit: https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/light-up-downtown-program/

Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Best Practices:

- **Know who you're renting to/who is staying on your property.** You play a role in who stays at the properties that you represent. Avoid offering deeply discounted room rates and have clear policies when renting to unchaperoned minors.

- **Keep accurate records of all tenants staying on your property**. This includes photocopies of driver's licenses and vehicle license plate numbers.

- **Make your occupancy policies clear.** Include occupancy policies on your website or in welcome materials so visitors are aware, and be sure to also detail the policies in lodging agreements.

- **Consider enforcing a security deposit policy** if applicable, or keep credit card information on file in the event that damages/destruction occurs. Similar to occupancy policies, include this policy information on your website and in lodging agreements.

- **Provide employees and front desk staff with talking points for tough customer questions they may receive.** You can reference the Internal and External Talking Points *(found inside of this toolkit)*, and be sure to add talking points for any frequently asked questions that are specific to your business so that your employees feel prepared.

- **Maintain an open dialogue with employees** to ensure they know to report any customer issues, violations of your lodging policies and other concerns to the appropriate manager.

- **Work in collaboration with the Ocean City Police Department.** Businesses can assist the OCPD in maintaining the safety of visitors and staff while effectively addressing disorderly behavior on private property.
  - The responsibility of maintaining safety on private property begins with the property owner.
  - OCPD is responsible for maintaining safety on public property, such as sidewalks and roadways.
  - Consider hiring private security for your property.

- **Designate a "Business Owner Designee."**
  - The Business Owner Designee should be visible on the property, especially between 5 p.m. and 1 a.m.
  - The Business Owner Designee can be an owner, manager or security personnel, and it is best for that person to wear a business uniform so that they are easily identifiable.

- **Train staff on how to defuse an issue when it arises on your property.** Maintaining everyone's safety is always the top priority. Most of the time, a Business Owner Designee can defuse the situation without involving the police. However, it's important for all staff members to know how to handle an issue when it arises. Here are a few tips to address disorderly behavior on your private property:
  - Seek voluntary compliance by requesting the individual(s) discontinue their behavior.
  - Ask the individual(s) to leave the property by giving a trespass warning.
  - Enact evictions if necessary.
  - If the Business Owner Designee cannot obtain voluntary compliance, call the police. Calling the police allows officers to enter private property and assist.
  - In many trespassing cases on private property, the officer will be able to make an arrest, particularly if the trespass warning is given in the officer's presence.
  - Officers are not always able to make an arrest, as some offenses qualify for a criminal citation in place of an arrest.
  - If an arrest is made, the Business Owner Designee may be subpoenaed as a court witness.

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External & Internal Talking Points

External Talking Points

Share these talking points with your staff to help them address some of the tough questions they may be receiving from customers who are planning a vacation in Ocean City.

General Safety FAQs:

Is it safe for my family to visit Ocean City? Is it safe on the Boardwalk?
- Ocean City is a great destination for families, and it's safe to visit Ocean City and the Boardwalk.
- During the summer, particularly in June, Ocean City has historically experienced a few isolated incidents with young adults on the Boardwalk and downtown area (typically between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.), but the town is very safe and the Ocean City Police Department stays vigilant in protecting the community.

Is June a good time to visit Ocean City with my family?
- In June, Ocean City typically sees an uptick in disorderly behavior on the Boardwalk and downtown area late at night, due to it being a popular time for young adults to visit Ocean City.
- This behavior historically subsides after June.
- If you visit Ocean City in June, you can expect larger crowds of young adults on the Boardwalk and downtown area, occasional noise and increased law enforcement presence.
- While the town is always doing its best to ensure everyone has a positive experience in Ocean City, visitors seeking the most family-friendly experience possible may want to consider planning their vacations for later on in the summer.

Is it safe to send my high school senior/teen to Ocean City?
- It is a parent's choice on whether or not to send unchaperoned high school students and teenagers to Ocean City in June; however, it's important for parents to know that the popular Play It Safe program has been canceled for the 2021 season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- June has historically been a popular time for high school graduates and other young adults to visit Ocean City, leading to an increase in disorderly behavior, compared to the other 11 months of the year, throughout town.

What actions are being taken by the Town to increase safety and prevent crime this year?
- This June, the Ocean City Police Department will be reallocating officers and modifying patrol times in order to increase law enforcement presence on the Boardwalk and throughout town.
- The OCPD will also increase the presence of allied agencies if needed, such as the Worcester County Sheriff's Office, Maryland State Police, and the Natural Resources Police.
- Officers will be strictly enforcing all laws and ordinances, and the OCPD will continue to be vigilant as always.

If I want more information about how safe it is to visit Ocean City, who should I contact?
- For more information about town-wide safety and enforcement measures, please contact Ocean City Communications Manager Jessica Waters at JWaters@oceancitymd.gov or OCPD Deputy Communications Manager Ashley Miller at AMiller@oceancitymd.gov.

COVID-19 FAQs: *(Talking Points Subject to Change based on MD Guidelines)*

Is it safe to visit Ocean City during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Ocean City is open for business and we are excited to welcome visitors, but keep in mind that an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any place where people are present.
- While you're here, we ask that you follow the rules and guidelines outlined by the CDC and State of Maryland, and we encourage you to continue practicing health and safety guidelines, including physical distancing.
- Personal responsibility and doing what is comfortable for you and your family will continue to be of great importance during your trip to Ocean City.

Can visitors travel from out-of-state to Ocean City?
- The restrictions on out-of-state travel have been lifted, but individuals are encouraged to get tested for COVID-19 when returning to their original destination.

Is Ocean City practicing safe social distancing guidelines? What precautionary measures are businesses taking?
- The health and safety of residents, visitors, and employees is Ocean City's number one priority. Ocean City is encouraging individuals to practice social distancing guidelines and adhere to the rules and guidelines outlined by the CDC and State of Maryland.
- Ocean City is also working closely with the business community, and all businesses are advised of how crucial it is to adhere to operational guidelines described by the CDC and State of Maryland.

Are masks required in Ocean City?
- Masks and/or face coverings are not required in Maryland in outdoor public areas, including the Beach and Boardwalk.
- Face coverings are still required indoors at all public and private businesses and when using public transportation.
- Visitors who are not yet vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue wearing masks, especially when physical distancing is not possible.

What is currently open to visitors in Ocean City?
- The Beach and Boardwalk in Ocean City are open to visitors. Lifeguards are off duty until the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. As with previous years, Ocean City does not encourage anyone to go into the ocean when lifeguards are not on duty.
- In Maryland, many businesses such as restaurants, retail stores and amusements are currently allowed to operate at full capacity.
- For a comprehensive overview of what you can expect when visiting Ocean City, please visit www.ococean.com.
- We also encourage you reach out to individual businesses prior to your visit for specifics on safety precautions and hours of operation.

Have any Ocean City services changed due to COVID-19?
- Some Ocean City services have changed based on restrictions and state guidelines. One example is transportation services. Tram and bus schedules will vary throughout the summer. For the most up-to-date information, visit oceancitymd.gov. Visitors are also encouraged to utilize the TransLoc Rider App to track buses in real-time.
- Please pack your patience. Remember, many businesses are operating with limited staff.

Internal Talking Points

Use these talking points to address employee FAQs about safety measures in Ocean City and at your business. Modify the business-specific FAQs to best address your employees' concerns.

What actions are being taken by the Town to increase safety and prevent crime this year?
- This June, the Ocean City Police Department will be reallocating officers and modifying patrol times in order to increase law enforcement presence on the Boardwalk and throughout town.
- The OCPD will also increase the presence of allied agencies if needed, such as the Worcester County Sheriff's Office, Maryland State Police, and the Natural Resources Police.
- Officers will be strictly enforcing all laws and ordinances, and the OCPD will continue to be vigilant as always.

Why does crime seem to increase in June?
- In June, Ocean City historically sees a spike in crime and disorderly behavior as June tends to draw a younger demographic to Ocean City.
- However, for more than a decade, crime has trended downward after July 1 each year, and Ocean City begins to draw in more family visitors.

What will you be doing to keep me and other employees safe?
- The safety of our employees is always our number one priority. Please know that we take your safety very seriously and will be stepping up our safety protocols, including [INSERT SPECIFIC DETAILS].

What if I don't feel safe coming to work?
- The safety of our employees is our top priority, so please let your manager know if you ever feel unsafe to come to work, if you ever feel unsafe during your shift, or if you have any other safety concerns.

If a customer asks me if it's safe to visit our business or anywhere else in town, what should I tell them?
- Please refer to the "External Talking Points" for helpful information about Ocean City's safety efforts and COVID-19 measures.

OC Strong & United

KEEP OC LITTER FREE

Keep OC Litter Free

The Town of Ocean City, Green Team and community partners have been working diligently on an anti-littering campaign in hopes of reducing the amount of trash on the beach, streets, Boardwalk, and in the ocean and surrounding coastal bays. The Green Team recognizes that there is no easy solution and it will take the community as a whole to reduce the amount of litter that has been occurring.

The Litter Free OC Campaign encourages businesses, visitors, residents, and students to commit to this effort in reducing litter by singing a pledge to take part in this campaign at the newly developed website https://oceancity.green/.

Keeping Ocean City clean is invaluable for multiple reasons. As a beach community, protecting our surrounding marine life, coastal bays and preventing pollution could not be more important to us. It is also important to recognize that many people associate a clean community with being a safe community.

As a strong and united community, we all need to recognize that a clean and safe community makes us that much stronger and united. Keeping the streets, beaches and boardwalk free of litter creates a positive impression of our community as a whole and can inspire people to do their part in helping to keep it clean.

Below are a few initiatives for those who want to help reduce waste in Ocean City.

PROPERLY DISPOSE OF YOUR WASTE: When you visit the beach, take everything you brought when you leave or place your waste INSIDE of a receptacle. Throw your cigarette butts out at proper receptacles and don't throw them out the window either!

REDUCE YOUR WASTE. One way to prevent the amount of trash you leave behind is by thinking carefully about what you take in the first place. Find products that are reusable and reduce trash.

- Think about bringing a reusable water bottle or flatware to the beach.
- Skip the straw the next time you order a drink from a restaurant.
- Wear a clean and reusable face mask to help curb plastic waste.
- Bring your reusable shopping bag the next time you visit the grocery store.

HELP PICK UP TRASH when you're walking the beach, sidewalk or streets. Call our Engineering Department at 410-289-8845 for FREE clean-up supplies OR volunteer in local clean-ups.

SPREAD THE WORD: Tag **@townofoceancity** on Instagram in any of your clean-up initiatives and use the hashtag **#LitterFreeOCMD** so we can share your efforts!