



A Publication of the North Carolina Department of Commerce - Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

## **Special Edition NewsLink for Oct. 30, 2009**

### **Division Responds to Rock Slide Situation**

The Division of Tourism continues to work to mitigate the impact of the rock slide that occurred near the Tennessee state line early this week. Efforts continue to work with the media, industry partners and potential visitors to promote the Division's message that Western North Carolina is open and easily accessible for fall and holiday travel. The Division has implemented several strategies and will have more efforts as the situation unfolds.

#### **IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES:**

VisitNC.com will be continually updated with the latest information on Interstate 40 and North Carolina's other highways from the N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT) and from regional partners. The Division maintains a travel advisory on the main page of its Web site to alert travelers about detours.

Officials from the Division have worked with other state agencies including the Governor's office to coordinate economic and marketing recovery assistance to Western North Carolina. Gov. Bev Perdue signed a declaration of a State of Emergency which is the first step in seeking federal funds to help clear debris and repair the road, as it enables the NCDOT to request funding assistance from the Federal Highway Administration. These federal funds will also be used to support the state's advertising and communications efforts relating to the rock slide.

The Division has worked with media ranging from the Weather Channel to local TV stations and newspapers throughout the state to explain the exact nature of the incident, and insist that they report an accurate and balanced account of the situation. The Division used this opportunity as a chance to further promote the fall color season, with fall color information appearing on outlets such as the Weather Channel and WRAL-TV in Raleigh.

Welcome Center staff have contacted local destination marketing organizations, offering to replenish supplies of the Official North Carolina Travel Guide and state maps as needed, since normal traffic patterns have obviously shifted. The Division's I-40 West

Welcome Center at mile marker 10 is currently in an area that is not accessible to interstate traffic, so staff from I-40 West will work at the I-26 West Welcome Center in Madison County at peak times during the fall color season.

#### DEVELOPING STRATEGIES:

The Division is working with regional partners to conduct preliminary research to test perceptions about what consumers think about the incident. This research will help guide the Division's future response.

Media relations and public information efforts continue in collaboration with NCDOT and mountain region partners to ensure the traveling public understands Western North Carolina's appealing destinations and attractions remain accessible as the important holiday season approaches.

A multi-media advertising campaign similar to the special advertising done during the 1997 rock slide is planned in key seasonal markets. The Division will leverage federal resources to assist in these efforts.

For more information from NCDOT about the rock slide and detours, [click here](#) or follow NCDOT on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/ncdot>.

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#### FEEDBACK WELCOME

The N.C. Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development is committed to serving North Carolina's tourism industry. If you have feedback regarding any of the Division's programs, let your voice be heard at [visitnc@nccommerce.com](mailto:visitnc@nccommerce.com).