

**AAPA 2020 Communications Awards  
Port of New Orleans**

**Entry Classification: Overall Campaign**

**Entry Title: Port NOLA Now More than Ever COVID-19 Campaign**

**Summary:** In March 2020, faced with a rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, sudden stay-at-home orders, supply chain disruptions and suspensions of all U.S. passenger cruises, the Port of New Orleans' Public Affairs team pivoted quickly from our regular messaging and programming. We launched a deliberate communications campaign that was both responsive and strategic. We responded in real time to the unfolding, unprecedented crisis with information and updates on our website and social media, and developed strategic aligned messaging across all our communications channels — including earned and owned communications tools as well as media buys.



**1. What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

In March, New Orleans was named a global epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic that was beginning to have an impact nationwide. Despite stay-at-home orders, global impacts, cruise suspensions, Port NOLA was fortunate that we did not experience the same supply chain disruptions. Our cargo and rail operations continued uninterrupted and essential staff continued to report or work remotely. Like all ports across the country, we were faced with adapting immediately to an unprecedented and uncertain reality.

It became critical to communicate in real time with our industry stakeholders, our employees and the community. And we had to acknowledge the new reality of COVID in our ongoing communications. Our existing messaging would have come across as tone deaf if we did not take these factors into consideration:

- Shippers and other industry partners wanted to know if we open for business.
- Cruise passengers wanted to know if and when they should move forward with their cruise plans.
- Port workers (truckers, longshoremen, direct port employees) and the community needed to have confidence that we were moving forward with their health and safety as our top priority.
- We also saw an opportunity to highlight the importance of our unsung industry and our essential workers who continued to provide vital goods and infrastructure at a time of crisis for our country.

**2. How does the communication used in this entry map back to the organization's overall mission?**

The Port of New Orleans' mission is to drive regional economic prosperity by maximizing the flow of international trade and commerce as a modern Gateway.

The core of our communications efforts is to convey the Port's value as a global gateway and an economic engine. From an industry standpoint, by providing vital information in a timely manner and highlighting the port's resiliency during this crisis, we instill confidence in our capabilities to customers and to our workforce.

From a non-port user perspective, when the community and our policymakers recognize the Port as a resilient economic engine working for Louisiana families, even through a global pandemic, they are more likely to become ambassadors for our mission and support the Port when issues arise such as the funding of infrastructure or land-use issues for potential port development.

**3. What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

**Overall Goal:** To pivot quickly from our regular messaging and programming and launch a deliberate communications effort to keep our audiences informed and engaged in ongoing and meaningful ways — responding in real time to the unfolding, unprecedented crisis, as well as acknowledging our new reality through strategic, aligned messaging across all our communications channels.

### **Clear Objectives:**

- Inform shippers and other industry partners that we were still open for business.
- Message to Port workers (truckers, longshoremen, direct port employees) and the community that the maritime community was moving forward with their health and safety as our top priority.
- Communicate to cruise passengers about the changing status of cruises and provide resources with the cruise lines.
- Highlight the importance of our unsung industry that continued uninterrupted to provide vital goods and infrastructure at a time of crisis for our country.
- Salute the frontline workers who continued to report and serve during the pandemic in order to keep vital goods and infrastructure moving.
- Inform all our audiences that, because the Port never stopped working and we continue to plan for the future, we are poised to play an important role in the economic recovery.

### **Audience:**

**Primary:** Our maritime stakeholders, port users, maritime workforce, Port tenants, Port employees.

**Secondary:** General public, non-maritime partners, and policymakers/elected officials.

### **4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**

#### **Timeline: March 13 – present**

**Strategies:** The Port administration building was closed and all admin staff were working remotely. A staff of five, we had access to our servers remotely and all our digital assets. We spoke daily and had a team meeting twice a week via Zoom and were in close communication with the Chief of Staff and President and CEO to strategize our messaging. We began to package our communications pieces under the theme of “Your Port NOLA Gateway, Now More than Ever,” pivoting away from our campaign at the time which was “Opportunity Calls, We Answer.”

Most of this campaign was executed with existing staff and with owned or earned communications assets, except for some paid programming:

- \$21,000 for Maritime Month partnership with WWLTV – Local CBS affiliate
- \$5,000 for billboards
- \$3,500 for JOC e-blast

**Outputs:** Everything was set into motion on March 13 with the Governor of Louisiana’s order to social distance and close all schools. We immediately launched a COVID-19 landing page on the website that included business continuity information, cruise line updates, safety measures being enacted, and resources and contacts. When cruise lines suspended all sailings shortly after that, our website and social media was already established as a go-to platform and resource for media, shippers and cruise passengers.

In addition to real time and ongoing website and social media updates:

- We put out a press release about our business continuity and safety measures.
- We also recorded a message from our President and CEO acknowledging the new reality and letting people know we were keeping cargo moving, while doing our part to flatten the curve.
- We held an industry stakeholder Zoom briefing led by our President and CEO who gave our business continuity messaging. We followed this up a couple weeks later with an update email to the stakeholders.
- We also bought a Journal of Commerce (JOC) e-blast advertorial to send our business continuity and preparedness message to the broader industry.
- Scheduled advertisements were revised with that new verbiage and messaging.
- We sent a constant contact email out to our community and local government contacts.
- We also sent multiple employee update emails from the CEO.
- **Maritime Month During COVID:** We were also in the middle of planning our Maritime Month 2020 programming to be held in May. Given the pandemic, Maritime Month took on even more significance for us at the port and the maritime community. Our core Maritime Month objectives of conveying the port’s value remained the same, but we

adapted our messages and our tactics to acknowledge our new reality: **Now more than ever**, we salute our frontline maritime and logistics workers, who have continued to report through this crisis to keep goods moving.

With social distancing in mind, we shifted away from public events and gatherings for Maritime Month and employed all our digital and remote tools to engage our audiences:

- The Digital Learning Toolbox on our website is an example of how we are adapting our engagement efforts in this era. (An online resource offering parents and teachers multimedia tools to learn about the Port)
- We posted large-scale signage at the terminals, and 5 digital billboards along the I-10 corridor, saluting our essential workforce. The message: “Your Dedication Matters, Now More Than Ever.”

#### Maritime Month Events Under COVID:

- April 23 – Maritime Month/Day Board Resolution
- May – Louisiana Governor Maritime Month Proclamation recognizing the Port and essential workers
- May 1-30 – Your Working River Social Media Photo Challenge
- May 1-30 – Port NOLA Employee Where Y’at Video Shout Out (working from home or otherwise)
- May 12-18 – Harbor Police Appreciation/National Police Week
- May 22 – Live broadcast WWLTV morning news
- May 22 – Port Worker Appreciation Lunch – Grab and Go bag lunches

**Another special consideration:** In order to more accurately reflect our reality, we assigned our contract photographer to take all new images with workforce wearing masks.

#### Links to some of our COVID-19 Communications Pieces:

- [Business Continuity Message from the President and CEO](#)
- [COVID landing page on website](#)
- [COVID Business Continuity Press release](#)
- [Stakeholder Update Email](#)
- [COVID Community Update](#)
- [Digital Learning Toolbox](#)
- [Employee Appreciation Video](#)



Maritime Month ads and news segments:

- [30-second TV commercial](#): “Your working River Now more than Ever”
- [WWLTV: How the Port of New Orleans has found success despite coronavirus challenges](#)
- [WWLTV: On Maritime Day, recognizing the importance of coffee to the Port of New Orleans & local economy](#)
- [WWLTV: Something new at the New Orleans Public Belt: new fleet of lower-emission locomotives](#)
- [WWLTV: Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser on the importance of the cruise ship industry to the Port of New Orleans](#)
- [Great Day Louisiana: Harbor Police Keep Us safe](#)

#### Signage at Terminal and Billboards





**5. What were communications outcomes from this entry, what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

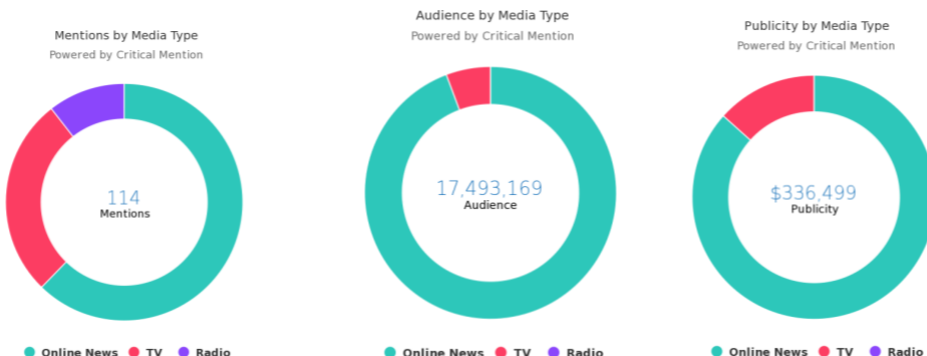
**Anecdotal:**

- Our industry partners were appreciative of the proactive stakeholders briefing Zoom call and emails, saying that we were the first to provide the information unsolicited. 300 industry stakeholders were invited to the Zoom briefing, more than 200 attended, including ILA, shippers, freight forwarders, carriers, terminal operators, river pilots, tenants.
- Our tourism partners and media found what they needed from our website before having to call or email for information.
- Our local government and economic development partners have acknowledged the Port’s resilience and role in the recovery in their talking points and have invited our executive team to be panelists and speakers addressing the COVID crisis.
- A local food provider saw our billboard saluting our port workers and, realizing they were on the front lines along with health care workers, she donated and delivered 500 free meals to longshoremen and other port workers.

**Measurables:**

- Port NOLA COVID website landing page: **10,399** page views since we launched the page.
- Digital Learning Toolbox: **842** page views on the Port NOLA website and earned **15** media mentions.
- Business Continuity Video Message from the President and CEO: **488** views
- JOC e-blast: sent to **15,000** inboxes
- Digital Billboards, rotated play @ 5 locations for 5 weeks: **228,168** plays, **8,530,000** impressions
- WWL-TV Partnership - paid
  - 175 x :30 spots: **837,267** Net Reach. The TV Schedule delivered **1.9 million** impressions.
  - Co-branded Facebook page: **112,023** people reached
  - Great Day Louisiana interview: reached **17,671** viewers and **13,600** households.
  - WWLTV.com banner ads: **250,000** impressions delivered, 118 clicks
  - Home Page Push Down on WWLTV.com, **52,100** impressions delivered
  - Pre-roll on WWLTV.com had 41,000 impressions delivered
- WWL-TV Partnership – Earned News component
  - Maritime Day Broadcast news coverage” reached **32,700** during the first hour of the morning newscast alone.

**Port NOLA COVID Media coverage:**



Social Media metrics on posts during COVID-19 pandemic to date:

- Facebook: 70,903 reached and 7,444 engaged.
- Twitter: 109,100 impressions and 86 engaged.
- LinkedIn: 76,021 impressions and 1,781 engaged.
- Instagram: 5,953 reached and 543 engaged.

**Port of New Orleans**  
Published by Hootsuite [?] · April 4 · 🌐

During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the Port of New Orleans continues to operate as a global gateway, with frontline Port and NOPB railroad employees ensuring the safe and efficient movement of cargo and necessities and maintaining the fluidity of the supply chain.

Port NOLA remains committed to remaining open for business, while also doing our part to "flatten the curve." #portnolagateway #yourportyournola



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portnola Another beautiful day on your working river, now more than ever! Port NOLA continues to serve, and we are celebrating #PortNOLAMaritimeMonth – let us continue to salute those who are keeping us moving. #portnolagateway #yourportyournola Don't forget to snap your photos of the working Mississippi River and share with us at #portnolamaritimemonth.

May 20

**Port of New Orleans**  
Published by Jessica Ragusa [?] · May 7 · 🌐

Thanks to the Ports America Team for capturing this photo of the Blue Angels flyover yesterday at the Napoleon Ave. Container Terminal. We salute all heroes right now working in all the frontline fields providing necessities and services for our country. We are proud of our shipping and logistics community, and we persevere together now more than ever. #portnolamaritimemonth #portnolagateway #yourportyournola



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April 9

**Port of New Orleans**  
Published by Jessica Ragusa [?] · April 17 · 🌐

Throughout these challenging times, Port NOLA continues to serve as a global gateway for our community, state and country. Frontline Port workers ensure the safe and efficient movement of cargo and necessities during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Join us in thanking those hard working men and women who continue to serve. #yourportyournola #portnolagateway



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