



National Wildfire Coordinating Group Communicator's Guide for Wildland Fire Management: *Fire Education, Prevention, and Mitigation Practices*

4. Communication Planning and Strategy

4. Communication Planning and Strategy
 - A. Introduction
 - i. What Communication Can/Cannot Do
 - ii. Perspective from Wildland Fire Communicators
 - iii. Surround Sound Strategy
 - B. Best Practices: Communication Planning
 - i. Situation Analysis
 - ii. Objectives
 - iii. Audiences
 - iv. Messages
 - v. Strategies
 - vi. Tactics
 - vii. Action Plan/Timeline
 - viii. Evaluation
 - ix. Budget
 - C. Community Outreach
 - i. Public Presentations
 - D. Special Events
 - i. Event Planning
 - ii. Logistics
 - iii. Special Event Team
 - iv. Sample Timeline for Events
 - E. Working with News Media
 - i. General Media Relations Tips
 - ii. News Writing
 - iii. News Conference
 - iv. Event Announcement
 - v. Inviting Media to an Event
 - vi. Event Publicity
 - vii. Photos
 - viii. Media Days
 - ix. Tips for Calling Media
 - x. What to Say When Calling Media
 - xi. Arranging an Interview
 - xii. Interview Tips
 - xiii. What to do When a Media Representative Calls YOU
 - F. Crisis Communication
 - G. Youth Education Programs
 - i. Youth Organizations

Communication Planning and Strategy

Fostering communication with various audiences is the crux of this *Guide*. The Communication Planning and Strategy chapter outlines concepts to be considered when designing a communications plan, and offers descriptions of sample tactics. This chapter is written in a general sense, not tied to specific types of fire communication such as education, prevention, or mitigation. Subsequent sections will address sample messages and tactics for specific types of outreach.

Introduction

“Everyone in the organization is responsible for communicating fire messages” is a case often made. However, this admonition does not relieve organizations of the responsibility for planning their communications. Ecological communication planning targets specific messages to a specific audience for a specific response. Those who “fail to plan, plan to fail.” Systematic communication planning is required for wildland fire messages to become heard, acted upon, and impact policy and practice.

Communication planning for wildland fire management is not a universal solution, but is a tool to building understanding and support of wildland fire management practices at all levels. While few users of this Guide will have responsibility for national programs, most of us can influence wildland fire communication planning at the local or regional landscape level from which national efforts will be built.

A communication plan is a road map to delineate important issues and ensure consistent message delivery to key audiences. There is no “right way” to develop a communication plan. Experienced communication professionals develop their own preferred method depending upon the need. But first, let’s review what communication can – and cannot – do for you.

What Communication Can Do:

- Build an image
- Increase understanding
- Focus attention
- Break through background noise
- Optimize perceptions
- Influence opinion and behavior
- Foster credibility
- Put issues into perspective
- Create consistent agency messages

What Communication *Cannot* Do:

- Control media coverage
- Control messages
- Control spokesperson quotes
- Eliminate competitive side of story
- Eliminate the negatives
- Compensate for inadequacy
- Create or maintain a positive image that is not deserved

A Perspective from Wildland Fire Communicators

As illustrated in Chapter 3, public perceptions greatly influence wildland fire management. Perceptions of the risks associated with fire and its deeply rooted belief that “fire is bad” pose an immense communications challenge. ***Perception is reality*** in the minds of your audience, so communicators must learn about your target audiences’ knowledge, attitudes, concerns, and needs about wildland fire. Try thinking of communicating about wildland fire as conveying information to fulfill your target audiences’ needs and wants.

In *A Study of Wildland Fire Communications* (Clute, 2000), wildland fire communicators drew the following overarching considerations when preparing a communications plan.

- Incorporate evaluation into all of your communication activities and products. Evaluative feedback should be thought of as a continually occurring process to provide information for communication product revisions and for future communication product development.
- Be creative in your approach to wildland fire communication. Why communicate in the same manner you have been if you are getting little “value” for your efforts? Think like the members of your target audiences, and make obtaining wildland fire information worthwhile and easy for them.
- Develop generic, yet flexible, wildland fire information packets for different target audiences, such as homeowners, media, etc. Prepare these products for everyday use, but particularly

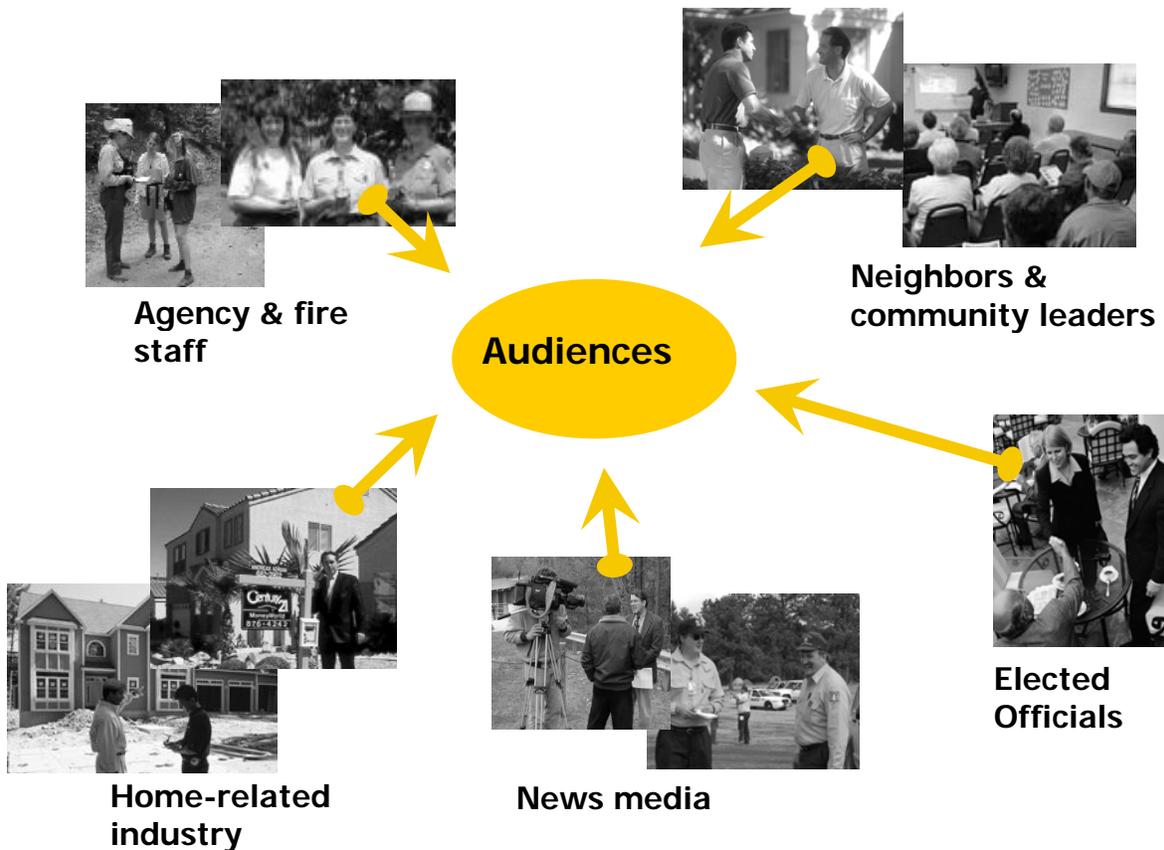
for times of high fire risk when demands upon you will be the greatest given your audiences' increased interest in wildland fire.

- Collaborate — especially with other wildland fire communicators and organizations. But do not forget about other important stakeholders outside the field of natural resources, such as non-governmental organizations, business associations, and local citizens' groups.
- Help to reduce wildland fire jargon by using easy to understand, commonly used language and terminology. Interpret the science of fire and fire management.
- As one communicator observed in the study, "The public does not like to be surprised by wildland fire!" Therefore, keep your "customers" informed about wildland fire and its management. Address your target audiences' needs and wants in a timely manner.

Surround Sound Strategy

As you prepare your communication plan, think about all the potential sources for reaching your audiences. Surround key audiences with your messages, and encourage them to spread the word among their circles.

Example communications plans are provided in the [Appendix](#).



Best Practices: Communication Planning

Following is a collection of planning concepts and examples from a variety of sources, including federal and state agencies and professional communications firms. This section is designed to help those responsible for wildland fire communications prepare effective communications plans that will support your wildland fire management programs. While the goal of your plan may be different in each situation, the principles of communication planning remain the same. This section addresses the following concepts:

- Situation Analysis
- Objectives
- Audiences
- Messages
- Strategies
- Tactics
- Timeline
- Evaluation
- Budget

Example plans are included in the appendix for your reference, with approval from the agencies that provided them. Additional materials and resources are available online:

www.nwccg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm.

Situation Analysis

Before beginning development of your communication plan, take time out to consider the current situation that is driving the need for your communication initiative. In the situation analysis, record what you know about the current environment (social, economic, and related factors) in which you will be conducting outreach, and what you expect your goal to be.

Situation Analysis is often referred to as Background or Purpose Statement. Parts of this section may include Overview, Opportunities, Challenges, and/or Lessons Learned.

For example, if you're developing a plan to communicate with residents about a prescribed burn in their area, give an overview of the community and background on how residents might view the project. Has there been a large fire recently that caused heightened concern? Have residents been vocal about prescribed burns in the past? Are they educated about the need for a prescribed burn? Is smoke management an issue?

Consider the following factors when preparing your situation analysis:

- General Audience Analysis
- Social and Psychological Data
- Political Data
- Economic Data
- Organization Data
- Ecological Data

General Audience Analysis

- What are your target markets? Why?
- What characteristics (social, economic, geographic, language, life-style, age, behavioral, and psychographic [e.g., "people living in region X are more likely to believe..."]) can be used to identify these groups or markets?
- What are their levels of knowledge, experience, and beliefs with or about wildland fire?
- What do they value?
- How do they organize politically? Socially (i.e., family, religious, informal networks)?
- What are their preferred sources of information?
- What information sources are most valued and believed?
- How will they benefit from this information?

- What are their relations with their environment?
- How does wildland fire influence these environmental relations, perceptions of environmental and management organizations, and economic relations with the land?

Social and Psychological Data

- Is the local community focused on the issue of wildland fire? Why? Why not? Implications?
- Is there a demand for information? Is the demand hidden (latent)?
- What is the perceived impact of fire on this community?
- Who are involved as communicators? Leaders?
- Who are the groups of people to be targets (schools, religious groups, industry, and recreational groups such as hunters)?
- Who formally and informally leads the groups?
- Are there informal groups and leaders who do not belong to identifiable (formal) groups who must be included?
- What are the perceived risks and personal values held by communities in fire-prone ecosystems?
- What other specific social and psychological data will be needed in order to plan?

Political Data

- What are the legal guidelines governing wild-land fire management options (national, regional [e.g., airsheds], state, local)?
- Where do the mission and policies of organizations managing or affected by wildland fire complement and conflict?
- What is the role of and who are the members of non-government organizations, coalitions, community groups, tribes, and similar groups?
- Who are and what is the role of the opinion leaders (and how do you access them) of the informal community, i.e., those casual groups that always come together at the local gathering places?

Economic Data

- What are real and perceived economic (individual, local, and regional) impacts of wildland fire? Who has the data? Who can help you generate the data?
- How will wildland fire affect what sectors of the economy?
- How are the amenity values and impacts calculated?
- What are the lost opportunity costs?
- What is the value of preventing fires?
- What is the cost of prevention vs. suppression?

Organization Data

- What knowledge, skill sets, and attitude (personnel) sets do you need to effectively communicate wildland fire messages?
- What financial, technical, and organizational skills are the better mix to effectively communicate within your sphere of influence?
- What are the public perceptions of the organization(s) that frame and lead the wildland fire communication efforts?
- Where multiple organizations are involved in originating the message, are there conflicts among the messages or priority of messages?
- Do organizations originating the messages vary in their mission and goals from the recipient organizations, groups, and communities?
- Have other organizations developed programs or materials about wildland fire? If so, have they been effectively utilized? Can they be applied to your situation?

Ecological Data

- What do you know about the ecological history including the historical fire regimes of the ecosystem?
- What do you know about the ecosystem in terms of genetic diversity, species composition, and communities and associations within?
- What do you know about the dynamics (permanence, diversity, and resiliency) of the ecosystem and the role of wildland fire on impacting these factors?
- What are the physical and meteorological characteristics that impact wildland fire and options for management within the ecosystem?
- Which of these data exists? What is the priority of need relating to the acquisition of these data? Who can supply required data, at what costs within what period of time? And how will you evaluate and synthesize the data provided?

Data should not be equated with knowledge or wisdom. Data only becomes information after it is synthesized within the context of the bigger questions.

Communicators often gather the best data they can and communicate “what science tells us we must do,” equating data as science. “Data dumping” only baffles listeners; recipients must understand how to interpret and use data. Informed decision making is the aim of communication planning. The community of users of data and information will then determine over time what constitutes knowledge and wisdom.

Objectives

The objectives outline exactly what you want your plan to accomplish. Objectives should be specific and measurable, which will also help gauge the success of your efforts. For example, if one of your objectives is to increase awareness, consider a benchmark survey before you begin. This will aid in evaluation of how much awareness increased after the program.

Example objectives:

1. Increase community awareness about the long-term benefits of prescribed burns by 25 percent over a two-year period.
2. Generate support from community leaders, elected officials, and other influencers in fire management planning efforts.
3. Increase Web site traffic from 20,000 to 25,000 visitors per month by fiscal year end.

Audiences

Defining your audience is one of the most important elements of communication planning. It is important that you address every group or organization that might be impacted by your plan so you can ensure your communications are appropriate for the audience. Be sure to consider both internal and external audiences, as well as the people who influence your audience.

You may be surprised that staff within your own agency may not understand fire management. To ensure consistent communication with external audiences, be sure to communicate with your internal audiences.

Internal audience examples:

- Agency leadership
- Staff beyond fire management, including those who interact directly with the public (e.g. interpretation, visitor’s center)
- Fire management staff
- Partners & non-governmental organizations

External audience examples:

- Residents and absentee landowners in the wildland/urban interface
- Visitors to public lands
- Educators
- Local, regional, state, tribal and national elected officials
- Journalists/news media, weather forecasters

Messages

The cornerstone of any communication program is a set of consistent, compelling messages for use in all proactive and reactive communications. Messages should be actionable messages where appropriate so that, in addition to educating, they will motivate the audiences to act on what they have learned. You may be asking that audiences be informed and supportive of agencies' wildland fire efforts, or that they get involved in local activities.

Key messages are general concepts that agencies and organizations are encouraged to incorporate into their discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information, and prevention efforts. Key messages are umbrella statements that require additional supporting points and examples for context.

Supporting points provide detail for the key messages and enable communicators to further explain the roles of: wildland fire in the ecosystem, land management agencies, tribes, and partners.

For example, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Fire Education Working Team has developed a set of core messages for agencies to use in communicating the role of wildland fire. These messages have been through an extensive interagency development and review process, and have been approved by the NWCG:

- Wildland fire is an essential, natural process.
- Society's influence has altered historic fire cycles, leading to a dangerous and difficult buildup of vegetation in our wildlands.
- Land management agencies are committed to a balanced fire program that will reduce risks and realize benefits of fire.
- Improving the health of the land and reducing risks to communities requires partnerships among federal and state agencies, tribal governments, fire departments, communities, and landowners.
- Public education is necessary to the success of fire management programs.

The complete **messages**, along with supporting points, are available in the *Education* section of this *Communicator's Guide*, or online at: www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt.

News media are not simply a vehicle for reaching your audience; they can be an audience in themselves. It is important to educate media on the issues surrounding fire management so they are able to provide context for their readers/viewers/listeners. Consider providing them with background for covering wildfires. The Virginia Department of Forestry's Web site includes a sample. www.dof.virginia.gov/fire/resources/media-guide.pdf

Use local and regional examples to place messages into context for your audiences, connecting with them on a personal and emotional level.

Strategies

Strategies define the general path you are planning to take to reach your objectives. They help identify the roadmap to success, without getting into the specific directions. In the tactics section, you will get into the specifics of exactly how you are going to implement your strategies. Strategies should tie directly back to objectives.

Remember: fire does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. Consider your neighboring agencies, tribes, and related organizations and indicate where you will need to coordinate efforts – especially if your outreach could impact their goals.

Example strategies to support the above Objective 1 *Increase Community Awareness* might include:

- 1.A. Proactively communicate clear, consistent messages about the benefits and risks associated with prescribed burns through all communications.
- 1.B. Provide news media, community leaders, elected officials, and other influencers with the knowledge, tools, and motivation they need to communicate with their constituencies.
- 1.C. Facilitate grassroots support and peer-to-peer communication through targeted community outreach.

Tactics

Tactics are the specific activities you will complete as you implement your plan. Each tactic should directly relate to your strategies and support your objectives. This section should be detailed and can be divided with different tactics for each audience. Be as creative as possible with tactics and consider your audiences and how they may be influenced.

Communications is more than sending press releases to the media. While media outreach is often important, you may also want to consider tactics such as advertising or direct outreach to communities, officials, businesses, and others.

Example tactics that support the above Strategy 1.B. – *Provide Tools for Influencers*:

1.B.i. Community Leaders

- 1.B.i.a. Facilitate one-on-one meetings with local community leaders and/or elected officials and a member of the fire management team to educate officials about the prescribed burn.
- 1.B.i.b. Provide newsletter copy and encourage leaders/officials to include information on their Web sites and/or in constituent newsletters.
- 1.B.i.c. Provide talking points and encourage leaders/officials to communicate with the public during meetings and events.

1.B.ii. News Media

- 1.B.ii.a. Conduct briefings with news media to make them aware of the benefits of the prescribed burn as well as the risk. Provide background information and online resources.
- 1.B.ii.b. Invite local morning television talk shows, weather forecasters, or radio drive-time shows to conduct an on-air interview with a representative of the entity about the prescribed burn. Suggest the location of the planned burn to show viewers the need.
- 1.B.ii.c. When sufficient time has passed to begin to see noticeable effects from the prescribed burn, encourage media to do follow-up stories about the benefits.

Example tactics that support the above Strategy 1.C. – *Facilitate Grassroots Support*:

1.C.i. Collateral Materials

- 1.C.i.a. Develop a detailed brochure/flyer for homeowners and absentee landowners explaining exactly where and why a prescribed burn will occur. Provide background on the long-term benefit of the prescribed burn.
- 1.C.i.b. Develop "Tell-a-Friend" cards and supply four to five cards in each packet so users can share with family, friends, and colleagues. The front of each card will include the projected date, time, and location of the prescribed burn. The back of the card will include facts about the benefits this specific burn will have on the area, as well as tips for managing smoke impact and other potential adverse effects. The card also will direct readers to the Web site for more information.

1.C.ii. Community Outreach

- 1.C.ii.a. Conduct presentations at homeowner association meetings. The fire management team will provide an overview of what will take place. Enlist a well-respected and well-informed homeowner who is supportive of the effort to speak from personal experience about the benefits of the planned burn.
- 1.C.ii.b. Host a booth at community festivals to disseminate collateral materials.

Following is a sample list of general tactics and materials to consider as you develop your communications plan.

- Community workshops and/or presentations during meetings of resident associations, civic and social groups
- Meetings with community leaders and elected officials
- Online resources such as dedicated Web page, electronic newsletters, e-mail notification
- Editorial briefings, one-on-one media interviews
- Press conference (Limited use recommended, such as when you have hard news to report, or an award to present)
- Byline articles in magazines or news briefs for inclusion in community newsletters, church bulletins, Web sites, bill inserts and mailings by utilities, insurance, real estate, and other home-related industries
- Public service announcements
- Toll-free hotline
- Detailed press kits, including backgrounders, fact sheets, spokesperson profiles, photos/artwork
- B-roll video footage (*NOTE: Do not produce pre-packaged video news releases [VNR]. B-roll footage is more cost-efficient, and more likely to be used by news media.*)

Action Plan/Timeline

Timelines are a great tool to ensure the entire team stays on task and meets pre-determined deadlines. Include enough time to develop materials and allow time for the approval and printing processes. Assign a specific person who is responsible for each task.

Evaluation

Establish a plan for measuring the success of your program. Refer back to your objectives to determine what evaluation tactics will be necessary. Also consult your agency's management team to help determine what is required. Consider thinking beyond a written report of activity to include specific outcomes of your efforts. Evaluation can range from basic to complex, depending on the scope of your project. The findings of the evaluation can improve the selection and implementation of future program strategies and tactics. A few examples of evaluation tactics are outlined below.

- Direct evaluation – Measures against quantifiable goals, such as number of activities you wanted to achieve. This may include number of calls made, letters sent, Web site visits, etc. The goal may be the number of news story placements, number of meetings, or number of people directly reached. However, keep in mind that these numbers are not an effective measurement of *impact* on your audience, because they do not show that the message carried through or that you motivated people to take action.
- Process evaluation - Includes measures of how well the communication plan was implemented. Did your team work well together? Did you implement all activities in the plan? Did you stay within budget?
- Outcome analysis – Measures the impact of your efforts. These can range from short term to long term, simple to complex.
 - One short term measurement tool is media content analysis. Review all the news coverage, and determine the percent of the stories that are positive, negative, or neutral. In cases such as prescribed burns, neutral may be the most likely goal. Media content analysis also can measure whether the messages you delivered are the ones the reporters published/aired.
 - A long term measurement tool is surveys of your audience. For example, to measure performance that involves public awareness, consider audience surveys or focus groups. Periodic surveys of the general public will track unaided and aided awareness and public tendency to be influenced by a message. Surveys may also be conducted among special audiences as part of the evaluation process. You may also consider working with professional communication evaluators from local colleges, universities, or private consultants.
 - Sometimes information used to evaluate communication programs may be available as secondary research, such as studies on industry trends or attitudes.

Budget

Budget planning can take place at the beginning of your communication planning process, or after you've determined what you want to accomplish. First consult with your agency's management team to determine the resources you have available. You may be asked to develop your plan first and make recommendations on staff hours and out-of-pocket expenses. Be as detailed as possible, and prioritize your plan so you know where you can trim your activities if necessary.

Community Outreach

It has been found through focus group research as well as general encounters with homeowners and social marketing research, that individuals are greatly motivated by local influencers and peer-to-peer recommendations. While federal, state, tribal, and local wildland fire organizations are making progress with prevention and public education efforts, an organized outreach initiative at the grassroots level can enhance these efforts by systematically identifying and enlisting influential “buzz generators” (or early adopters) who have an ability to affect change in their communities.

Local fire departments and volunteer firefighters can be effective messengers for your outreach efforts. They know the communities well and share many goals with state and federal agencies.

- Conduct presentations for neighborhood associations, homeowners groups, and tribal organizations.
- Participate in high traffic events (county fair, community festival, tribal fair, etc.) to raise awareness of your fire message among the broader community.
- Meet with leaders in the community who frequently advise residents (e.g. real estate and insurance agents, contractors, landscapers, tribal housing authority, HUD, fire prevention officers, fire marshals, fire chiefs, city council members, city managers, city planners, tribal council members) to educate them about the role of fire and the steps that can be taken to reduce wildland fire hazards.
- Identify other members of the community who are enthusiastic about your message and want to help spread the word among their circles.
- Gather testimonials from program participants to help demonstrate to other communities and reservations the value of an education/prevention/mitigation program.
- Develop **interpretive programs** (presented in Chapter 7) or **youth programs** (presented in this chapter).

Public Presentations: The Four C's of Persuasive Communication

Repeated studies have shown that public attitudes can be persuaded and positions of opposition can be mitigated with credible, face-to-face presentations. When developing presentations, consider a discussion flow that addresses core audience questions with the “Four C's:” Credentials, Connection, Context, and Catalyst.



1. Credentials: Why should the audience believe the speaker?

- **Credible information sources.** For technical discussions, presenters who are considered “experts” in the field they are addressing are generally ranked more believable by audiences. This means scientists, engineers, and senior technicians may be more persuasive than line employees, public information officers, bureaucrats, and managers.
- **Personal testimonials.** A peer who has had a personal experience with the subject matter can be among the most impactful presenters for public audiences. “I did it, you can do it to.” Or “Don’t let what happened to me happen to you.”
- **Third party views.** Audiences generally assign more credibility to presenters who they perceive are not visibly connected with the topic, and who do not directly benefit from the purpose of their arguments.

2. **Connection: Why should the audience care about what the speaker has to say?**
 - **Personal identification.** Audiences respond best when their vested interests are addressed directly. We can guess that most attendees to public meetings will already have a vested interest (homes, business, timber, health). The effective presenter should know these interests and directly address them in the presentation. How will a prescribed fire or community wildfire protection plan help them? What are the immediate and long-term benefits to them (as opposed to the forest or ecosystem benefits which often are intangible or future benefits).
 - **Confirmation of what is already known.** The American public is well accustomed to the prevalence of catastrophic fires, global warming, and climatic change. Confirming these points as causal factors for the need for prescribed burning or other mitigation efforts helps to better ensure success of persuasion.

3. **Context: How does the topic fit in the audience's lives?**
 - **Address the impact.** What impact will the issues discussed at the public meeting have on the audience? Will their daily activities need to change? Will they experience an impact, such as smoke? What are the long-term benefits?
 - **Illustrate the issues.** As much as possible, a presentation will be effective that can show through real stories and/or visual support the changing status and condition of wildlands over the last 50 years, and the post condition of wildlands following prescribed burns.

4. **Catalyst: What can the audience do, and how?**
 - **Effective calls to action.** Studies have demonstrated the most convincing and persuasive presentations are those where the audience is asked at the conclusion to conveniently do something. Filling out a survey, discussing the issues with their children, posting a list of alerts or safety measures in their homes are all small examples of providing the audience with easy action steps that help to certify their acceptance of the issues.

Several sample presentations are included in the appendix.

Special Events

Like any communication activity, a special event must have a clearly defined objective, audience, and action plan. This section outlines basic considerations as you develop your special event plan. Special events may include community fairs and festivals, state fairs, sports events, cultural festivals, school programs, civic center programs, parades, and more.

Event Planning

- 1. Have clearly defined fire prevention objectives for the event** – As with any project or program, wildfire prevention events must have clearly stated objectives that are measurable and understood. These objectives should come from the agency's fire prevention plan.
- 2. Understand the event you are dealing with** – Every event has its unique language, culture, and organizational structure. Likewise, they all have unique audiences or groups of followers. Some cater to “sophisticated” urbanites while others tend to attract a down-to-earth rural following. Some attract adults only, while others tend to be family oriented. You can never know too much about the activity you are dealing with.
- 3. Determine the scope of the project** – Decide what you want to do, what you want to accomplish, and the target audience you want to reach.
- 4. Involve the team/event sponsor from the beginning** – By taking the partnership approach, both the team or event and the fire prevention agencies benefit. By involving all of the partners from the beginning, this mutual benefit becomes obvious and ownership is created. Early involvement also avoids wasted efforts on aspects of the activity that may not be possible.
- 5. Understand the benefits to the partner, as well as to the wildfire prevention program** – As in any partnership, there must be mutual benefits to all parties involved. For the team or event, the enhanced public image created by association with the costumed characters or simply the general promotion of the activity may be the major benefit. Wildfire Prevention agencies achieve increased visibility or possible funding assistance from the partnership. Whatever the situation, the benefits must be clear and mutual to all parties involved.
- 6. Operate from a written action plan** – The key to success for executing any event is a written action plan that displays the objectives, responsibilities, timeframes, and logistics. A well written plan will contain these items and help everyone work towards the planned goal.
- 7. Have adequate staff to execute the event** – The complexity of activities associated with an event may vary with each event. The number of personnel needed will also vary. As with any project or program, staff positions needed to manage the event in a safe and efficient manner. Refer to your action plan.
- 8. Allow adequate lead time** – The amount of lead time to get ready will vary with the type of activities planned. If custom promotional materials or giveaway items are to be produced, you must allow time to design, procure, and produce these items. Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) produced items generally take less lead time. Allowing lead time in the planning stages allows you flexibility to deal with contingencies (emergencies).

9. **Plan for contingency actions** – Things don't always go as planned. You should have alternatives for the key components of your program.
10. **Focus on quality rather than quantity** – It is better to do a few well planned activities than many poorly planned. Start small and add activities as the event manager becomes more experienced. Variety is a key to an effective program but should not be achieved at the expense of quality.
11. **Plan a critique and follow-up** – The courtesy of thanking participants and helpers may help cement a relationship for future events. A formal critique and evaluation of each event is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the event and identify any needed changes.

Logistics

Once you have determined which activities will take place during the event, you will need to evaluate the following:

- **Permits** – Pending the event location, you may need an official permit or written permission to use the space.
- **Entrances and exits** – You'll need to know where to enter and exit the event.
- **Public entry gates** – Knowledge of these locations will help you determine the most effective prevention signing and promotional material distribution.
- **Concessionaire booths** – Locate your activities and displays where they will not interfere with other concessions and where your efforts will not be overshadowed or disrupted.
- **Banner space** – Check with your Event Contact regarding banner space and limitations. Always check before hanging your banners. Banners should be at least 36" x 72". Potential spaces for hanging banners include public entrances, grandstands, fences, etc. Look for high traffic, high visibility areas that do not conflict with other advertisements. Hang banners and posters neatly and remove promptly after the event.
- **Parking space for agency vehicles** – Your parking area should be pre-determined by your event contact. Park in a manner that will not interfere with event operations. Display parking permits in a highly visible location.
- **Dressing room for costumed character** – Work directly with the event committee or contact in determining the best location. Avoid areas with heavy traffic, such as public restrooms. Provide for privacy.
- **Safety considerations** – Minimize interference with other event activities. All activities should take place in areas that provide maximum safety to participants. Costumed characters attract children. This can create a hazard if not properly controlled. Some important safety precautions for event management are:
 - **Watch for potential ground hazards** – Be on the lookout for cables, ropes, boards and uneven ground at the event site.
 - **Avoid restricted areas** – Please honor the wishes of sponsors, partners, or cooperators in staying clear of such areas.

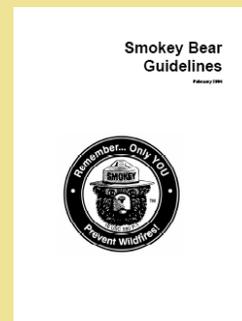
Special Event Team

- **Event Manager** – Key person responsible for developing, implementing and executing the event plan. Persons selected for this position should be well-versed in the organization of special events and public appearances. There should be only one event manager per event. Decide which agency, if there is more than one, will be the lead agency. The lead-agency provides the event manager and coordinates with cooperating agencies.
 - The event manager supervises and facilitates event activities and operations. The event manager conducts briefings with event staff to ensure proper execution of the event

plan. He/she will provide a “schedule of event activities” to all event staff. This should include clear direction and correct time tables. The event manager should not be directly involved in event operations but should be immediately available as a decision maker, facilitator, and trouble shooter.

- Documentation is the responsibility of the event manager. Valuable information can be obtained by de-briefing personnel at the end of each activity or event. This information will be used for completing the event evaluation.
- The event manager provides the leadership, enthusiasm, and motivation to set the tone for a successful event. He/she must ensure that activities for the event are carried out in a timely, friendly and professional manner. The event manager is also responsible to ensure that promotional materials are ordered, delivered on time, and distributed properly.
- **Photographer** – Provides a visual history of the event. This documentation phase is very important for local, regional, and national use in reports, newsletters, etc. Selection of the camera used should be based on the event conditions such as low light (flash), distance shooting (telephoto), and user abilities (automatic function). Digital cameras are preferred for convenience of sharing images electronically, but be sure you have high enough resolution for print quality. A minimum of 300 dpi (dots per inch) at the dimension size the image will be printed (e.g. 4” x 5”) is generally required for print.
- **Costumed Character** – It is important the person selected to serve as the costumed character be experienced or trained at doing the job. The costumed character’s must possess a basic understanding of the character standards and guidelines and uphold the character image and ethics. The costumed character should, ideally, be a person in good physical condition who can stand the rigors of the heat generated while wearing the costume, as well as perform the other physical duties involved with the event. The costume also should be kept clean and treated with respect.
- **Character Escorts** – Assist and supervise the costumed character during activities at an event. The escorts should be well versed in the various activities and limitations that can be accomplished by the costumed character. All agencies involved in the event should be allowed to provide an escort wearing the appropriate field uniform, as per agency policy.
- **Agency Public Affairs Officer** – Provides assistance with pre and post-event publicity, activity documentation, liaison with the news media, photography and announcer scripts.
- **Volunteers** – Augment your workforce and reduce program cost. Examples of organizations that may be willing to volunteer are volunteer fire departments, scouting organizations, senior citizens, Volunteers-in-Prevention, local equestrian clubs, community service clubs, high school activity clubs, etc.

It's critical that individuals who portray costume characters – particularly Smokey Bear – be properly trained to represent the icon. Strictly adhere to the guidelines for the character. For example, FSH 5109 offers a description of Smokey Bear.
www.symbols.gov



Sample Timeline for Events

3-6 months before the event:

- Formalize agreements for financing the event with all organizations and agency representatives.
- Select site for event and formalize cost, if any, for facilities and services with the facility manager.
- Plan the program for the event.
- Order all materials and supplies needed.
- Begin publicity; mail out brochures.

3 months before the event:

- Check to be sure all materials and supplies have been received.
- Check with the manager of event site for detailed arrangements.
- Event schedule.
- Layout of facilities.
- Equipment available.
- Any logistic concerns.
- Give event host copy of your schedule.

2 months before the event:

- Deadline for all equipment and material arrangement.

3 weeks before the event:

- Mail out publicity a second time.
- Send out invitations for the event.

1 week before the event:

- Prepare press kits.
- Review event activities, roles, and responsibilities.

Day before the event:

- Inspect site (if necessary).
- Check on catering, entertainment, etc., provided by community partners.
- Set up and check out equipment (podium, stage, sound systems, etc.).
- Review schedule with team players.
- Set up event area (if necessary).
- Call media contacts to confirm attendance.

Day of the event:

- Post signs.
- Set up sign-in table.
- Greet media and guests.
- Begin and conduct event.

1 week after event:

- Mail a follow-up letter to event participants expressing appreciation for their participation.
- Follow-up with media as appropriate.

Working with News Media

News media can be a valuable partner in sharing your news with the public. It is important to establish relationships with news media, and entrust yourself as a reliable source for information.

Working with local media to share your story with their viewers, readers, and listeners is a great way to generate awareness for your efforts. It can also educate more homeowners in your community and surrounding areas about how to prepare their communities for wildfire and get involved in Firewise Communities activities.

Advice and technical support in working with the media is available from agency Public Affairs Specialists or Public Information Officers. Most of these specialists work with the news media on a regular basis and have established invaluable contacts. If you plan to work with the media, contact your agency Office of Public Affairs or Public Information Office ahead of time to ensure that efforts are coordinated.

If your agency has a public affairs or media relations specialist who is available to assist you in generating awareness for your efforts, please contact him/her immediately and work within his/her guidelines.

Consider completing the [NWCG course S-203: Introduction to Incident Information](#) before working with news media.

General Media Relations Tips

- Consider the media as an ally, not an adversary. Build a strong, positive partnership with the media. Reach out to the media when you have a story to tell, and make yourself available when the media need information from you.
- Provide equal access — release the same information at the same time to everyone. Being labeled as a source that “plays favorites” can hurt your credibility. The exceptions to this are when a reporter calls on his/her own initiative and wants to do a story on fire prevention, or when you have a story idea that fits a specific media outlet.
- Remember that reporters are extremely pressed for time. Approach them in an intelligent, concise manner. Be mindful of deadlines.
- Invite media to cover your public events. Also consider posting it in local newspaper or TV community calendars.
- Encourage reporters to visit sites where they can see fire management/prevention/mitigation techniques are being/have been applied.
- Know the reporter’s publication/program and audience. *EXAMPLE: TV stations are more likely to cover events with large numbers of participants, action, and photo opportunities. Newspapers may cover any event, even if no photo opportunities exist.*
- Always prepare for an interview. Review the enclosed tips and appropriate message points prior to interviews.
- If you are uncomfortable with a reporter’s questions, or if he/she requests comment on something beyond the scope of your local program, please politely offer to put the reporter in touch with your agency’s national media relations team.
- Follow up to be sure the reporter has everything he/she needs for the story.
- If your program is currently facing any controversies that have caused backlash from media or the community, please consult your agency’s public affairs team prior to your outreach.
- **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS “OFF THE RECORD.”** However well intentioned, reporters are not obligated to refrain from publishing any information you share, regardless of the nature of the conversation. Don’t share information with a reporter that you would not be comfortable seeing in print/on air.
- Avoid saying NO COMMENT. Let the reporter know that you are not in the position to respond to certain questions without “no comment” being the soundbite on the evening news. Offer a brief explanation, such as: “The fire is currently under investigation” or “We are not in a position to provide details at this time.”

News Writing

There are several distinct tools used in news writing, such as news releases, media advisories, pitch letters, and letters to the editor. Each has a distinct purpose, and thus a distinct style. **Fact sheets** also are a critical news writing tool. Fact sheets are covered in the **Communication Materials** chapter.

I. News Release

The news release is the tool most commonly used to generate media interest in policies, programs, and activities. The purpose of a news release is to disseminate information. News releases should be well-written, informative, interesting, and brief. The content should be timely and newsworthy.

As you prepare your news release, use the 5 “W’s” (and the “H”) to organize and present your thoughts:

1. **Who** is involved, said/did something, to whom did something happen?
2. **What** was said/done, or will happen?
3. **When** did/will the story/event take place?
4. **Where** did/will it take place?
5. **Why** did/will it happen?
6. **How** did/will it happen?

Use a **media advisory**, described below, instead of a news release to announce press conferences, media days, show-me tours, or special events.

The order in which these facts appear depends on their importance in the story — the most critical go first. Avoid bureaucratic or technical jargon. Use small words rather than big ones.

Your news release should be formatted according to the specifications of your agency. Contact your public affairs/information officer to learn your agency’s distribution approval policy. Your agency may require review and signature by your public affairs/information officer before sending anything to the media. Your public affairs/information officer should also be able to provide a sample news release. Following are some general guidelines.

- Be sure to include the name and phone number of the best person to contact for more information.
- On the top left side of the first page, type “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.”
- Develop a headline that captures the gist of the release. Keep it as short as possible and incorporate powerful words.
- Start your release with a dateline, the city from which the story originates, (e.g., Boise, Idaho –) followed immediately by the first paragraph.
- Tell the most important part of the story in the lead (the first paragraph) by incorporating the “five Ws.”
- After the lead, elaborate on details in descending order of importance.
- Include quotes from the appropriate manager or appropriate staff member. Make sure that person approves the quotes before you distribute the release. The first quote should appear in the third or fourth paragraph.
- Within the body of the release, stick to the facts without speculating or giving opinion. Opinions should be reserved for quotes only.
- Don’t use bureaucratic and scientific words, phrases, clichés, slang, or agency terminology.
- Try to keep the release to one or two pages. If you need to go more than one page, type “- more - ” at the bottom of the page. Type “###” and center it below the last line to indicate the end of the release.
- Sometimes, particularly if you are in a remote area, you can increase the amount of coverage your news release receives by accompanying it with photographs for newspapers, videotape for television stations, and audiotape for radio stations. Photographs should be high contrast black and white glossies. For assistance in shooting videotape and recording audiotape for news releases, contact your Public Affairs Office.

II. Media Advisory

The media advisory is used as an invitation to encourage media to cover press conferences, media days, show-me tours, or special events. The media advisory should be kept to one page, and should answer the following questions about your event:

- **WHAT** will happen at the event. Write a brief description of your event.
- **WHO** will be present. List speakers, special guests and any other key participants in your event/announcement. Be sure to include correct spelling of names along with appropriate titles
- **WHEN** it will take place (date and time)
- **WHERE** it will take place, including address, city, state and any other pertinent details.
- **WHY** it is happening. Write a few words explaining the importance of the event. Why should the reporter want to come to it?
- **STORY ANGLES** that may interest media. Be sure to include any special photo or interview opportunities, tips, or “news you can use” information.
- **CONTACTS** for media call for more information. Be sure to include a cell phone number and e-mail address.

The advisory should be distributed two to three days prior to the event. Follow up via phone the day before the event and/or the morning of the event to encourage attendance.

III. Pitch Letter

A news release is not the only format for inviting news media to write a story. In fact, a well-written letter addressed to a specific reporter or editor is often the most effective way to get attention. This approach also interests the reporter as something specifically for his/her media outlet. For example, pitch letters are a good choice when you don't have hard news, but want to share examples of recent successes or ongoing activity. Consider the following as you prepare your pitch letter.

1. What is the story angle or approach you are offering?
2. Write a brief paragraph identifying the problem or issue you plan to address.
3. Write one to two brief paragraphs identifying your solution to the problem or position on the issue.
4. Make an offer of availability for an interview or to provide additional information.
5. Write an enticing lead. Why is this step last, you may ask? Because the first step is to think through the story you want to tell. Then go back to the first paragraph and write a compelling line to engage the reader.

IV. Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor is a compelling tool to advocate a position or address current events. Following are some tips for preparing a letter to the editor.

1. Choose one issue for your letter
2. Identify your organization and state the purpose of your letter
3. Write a brief background on the issue
4. Give your analysis or opinion in one brief paragraph
5. State a solution and make a call to action. What do you want the reader to do with the information you've presented?

News Conference

News conferences provide an opportunity to share important information with multiple media sources at once. However, use news conferences sparingly and limit them to important “hard news” subjects. Following are other tips to consider:

- The best time to hold a news conference is between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. This helps ensure that most reporters meet their deadlines.
- Avoid weekends, Mondays and Fridays as many media outlets are short-staffed on those days. Midweek days will usually provide better exposure for your message.
- Write a media advisory to announce the date, time, location, and subject of the news conference (see below). However, do not disclose details about the subject you are going to discuss because the media will use that information to write the story and skip the news conference. If a reporter calls and wants to talk about the topic before the news conference, politely refuse. If the story appears in one media outlet before the news conference, the rest of the media are less likely to attend.
- Review information about contacting media below.

Event Announcement

If you wish to use the news media as a vehicle to publicize a public event, prepare a concise news release to announce your event. The release should explain what will take place and why, include a quote from a local individual involved with your efforts, and explain the program. The release should be distributed to media at the same time invitation packets are distributed to your invitation list. In addition to reporters, send the release to the calendar section of your local newspaper.

Inviting Media to an Event/News Conference

When inviting media to an event or news conference, call to determine the name and contact information for the appropriate person to receive your announcement. In general, your media advisory and phone calls will be addressed to the following contacts:

- NEWSPAPER: City editor, managing editor, or environmental reporter
- TELEVISION: Assignment editor
- RADIO: News director

At least two days prior to an event or announcement, contact local newspaper, radio and TV stations and invite them to send a reporter and photographer to the event. You may want to contact the media further in advance – especially if you have a specific reporter in mind. However, media most likely will not be able to confirm attendance until the day of the event. Use your Media Advisory as a written follow up.

Event Publicity

If you have a well-attended event, consider working with local media to generate awareness for the agency/community's efforts to address local wildfire issues. This can be done in a number of ways.

- Enlist a reporter to attend the event and report on the program. It's best to do your homework to identify a reporter who covers wildfire issues and/or the environment.
- Distribute a news release via e-mail/fax on the day of the event, or a few days prior. Bring copies of the press release to the event to hand out to media who attend.
- Take photos at your event and send copies to the newspaper with your news release, preferably within 24 hours of the event. Be sure to include a caption to identify the people in the photo with their name, title, organization, and a brief explanation of what is taking place in the photo.

Photos

If distributing photos, be sure to include the names and titles of the individuals in the photos and an indication of where the photos were taken. Federal and state agencies must use a release form to get permission from non-agency individuals in the photograph. This signature allows you to use the photo of them in newspapers, exhibits, Web sites, and other materials.

To clarify issues affecting accurate reproduction and management of digital image files, consult the Universal Photographic Digital Imaging Guidelines.
<http://www.updig.org/guidelines/index.html>

Media Days

"Media days," "show me trips," or similar activities provide opportunities for reporters to go to the field to generate firsthand understanding of fire information/prevention/mitigation. For example, you could conduct a trip to show reporters examples of protected, and vulnerable, homes in the wildland/urban interface and demonstrate the steps homeowners can take to protect their property from wildfires. Following are a few tips as you plan your day.

- Determine the audience you need to reach and the message you want to convey. Develop a trip that will achieve your goals.
- Select the closest possible location - preferably no more than a 30-minute drive from the news media's office location. The closer the site, the more reporters you will attract. Schedule the trips for early to mid-morning so that reporters can meet afternoon deadlines.
- Have a variety of fire specialists on hand to provide information and answer questions.
- Plan activities. Taking a group out just to stand and talk to them about protecting a home from wildfire isn't nearly as interesting as showing them how a homeowner can clear brush around their property. Make sure there are lots of visual photo opportunities. Newspaper and television reporters need pictures to tell the story.
- Try to provide more than one story angle. Make a reporter's effort worthwhile by giving them an opportunity to cover several different stories on the same trip. These could be fire related or they could feature other natural resource management activities. For instance, on your way back from the wildland/urban interface, you could stop at a campground and demonstrate precautions recreationists can take to prevent wildfires.

Tips for Calling Media

- **Be concise** when contacting media. The nature of the news business leaves reporters and editors on very tight schedules. Explain your event in 30 seconds and offer to e-mail or fax a media advisory.
- **Be mindful of deadlines** and what times a station airs its newscasts or a newspaper goes to print. While specific times vary, it is generally best to contact media before 3 p.m.
- **Don't become a nuisance.** Once you've spoken with a reporter/editor and are sure he/she has received your advisory, there is no need to call again unless you've made changes.

What to Say When Calling Media

- Introduce yourself and tell the reporter/editor that you are calling on behalf of your agency/initiative.
- Ask if he/she has a few moments for you to talk about an interesting story idea.
 - *If he/she does*, proceed by explaining the highlights of the event/activity. The information you share should answer the questions of "who," "what," "where," "when," and "why." Try to explain this in less than 30 seconds. Then offer to e-mail/fax the advisory as background information.

- *If he/she doesn't*, offer to call the reporter/editor back at a more convenient time. Ask when would be a better time to call back and/or offer to e-mail/fax the information.
- If you reach voice mail, leave a 15- to 30-second voice mail message. If he/she doesn't have voice mail, ask if there is someone else to speak with about a story idea. If not, offer to call back at a more convenient time.

Arranging an Interview

If a station/newspaper would like to arrange an interview, tell the reporter that you'd like to have as much information as possible to help you prepare. Ask the reporter the following questions:

- What's the name of the person who will likely be conducting the interview?
- Would you like to speak via phone, or in person?
- Would you rather I come to your studio/newspaper, or do the interview at a site related to fire management/prevention/mitigation activity?
- What date, time would you like me to arrive?
- How long will the interview last?
- What angle would you like to explore?
- What kinds of questions should I expect?
- *TV / RADIO ONLY*: Will the interview be live or taped?
- *TV / RADIO ONLY*: What time will you start taping/go on air?

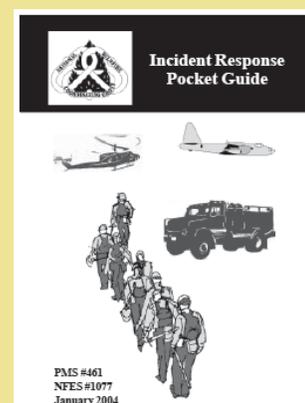
Before the Interview

- Know the reporter, publication/program, interview format, and audience.
- Know your goal for the interview. What do you want the interview to accomplish?
- Know what you want to say; prepare key message points.
- Imagine what questions the reporter will likely ask, and then write down the appropriate answers. Be sure to work in your message points.
- Prepare a range of potential questions you may be asked. Anticipate difficult questions.

Interview Tips

- Speak in "headlines." Offer a conclusion first, briefly and directly, and back it with facts or "proof points."
- Don't over answer. Short answers are better than long.
- Don't be confined by the question. Expand to a related point you want to make.
- Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution.
- Don't let false statements or figures offered by a reporter stand uncorrected.
- Don't repeat a reporter's negative statements or slurs. Frame your reply as a positive statement.
- Don't engage in hypothetical situations and "A or B" dilemmas. Only comment on actual situations.
- Speak clearly. Avoid jargon.
- Be engaging, likable.
- Don't know the answer? Don't fake it. If appropriate, assure the reporter you will find and provide the needed facts in a timely manner, or offer to assist the reporter in finding another source.
- Don't overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.
- Keep cool. Don't be provoked.
- Never lie to a reporter.

Refer to the *Incident Response Pocket Guide* for tips on media interviews.
www.nwcg.gov/pms



For Telephone Interviews

- Establish an “interview atmosphere” and mindset.
- Use notes.
- Ask questions in order to gain feedback.
- For radio, speak visually; use words to paint pictures.

For Television Interviews

- Sit erect, but not ramrod-straight, slightly forward in the chair.
- Resist the urge to shout into the microphone. Speak and gesture naturally.
- Talk to the interviewer and look at him/her, not the camera.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your “interview attitude” from the moment the reporter and videographer arrive until they leave.

What to do When a Media Representative Calls YOU

Before answering any questions, find out as much as you can about what the reporter is writing. Ask the following questions:

- What is the overall tone of the story?
- Is the reporter contacting other sources?
- What is the reporter’s deadline?

If deadline allows, “buy some time” and ask the reporter if you can call back. Review the interview tips and message points regarding the topic.

Crisis Communication

Fire tragedies and extensive fires as seen in Florida, Mexico, and elsewhere in 1998 brought the issues to the forefront of national and international news. Likewise, escaped prescribed fires such as Cerro Grande in 2000 that could not be controlled made headlines. For any immediate fire crisis, it is most important to cover the ABCs of communicating the basic message:

- A. Tell your audience we recognize (or better yet, are the first in alerting them about) the problem.
- B. Tell them we care about the impacts on them.
- C. Tell them what we are going to do to help mitigate these impacts.

All too often news reports are restricted to tight time slots and sound bites. However, each fire crisis is a window of opportunity for opening in-depth dialogues with our audiences about the need to reduce hazardous fuel accumulations and restore certain fire-dependent ecological processes. Audiences need to understand that an immediate need exists in many places around the world to reduce fuel load to prevent extreme fires and to both restore and maintain the health of fire dependent ecosystems.

Elements of a Crisis

A crisis is an unplanned event which triggers a real, perceived, or possible threat to life, health and safety, the environment, financial status or the organization's credibility. Following are characteristics of a crisis.

- Crises happen with little or no warning; only in retrospect do little pieces of information start to add up.
- Little or no information is available, especially in initial stages.
- Any available information is contradictory, incomplete or will change completely.
- Communications tools will probably not function properly.
- There may be physical damage.
- There will be much confusion.

Crisis Communication Goals

1. Control communications.

- A. Employ the front door strategy. The simple premise that a successful organization adopts in dealing with the media is this: Come in the front door and you will get complete cooperation; that is, all you need to know as quickly as we know it. Otherwise, if an organization closes the front door to the media, they will try to get the information through the side windows or back door, probably damaging and potentially tainted. The organization which allows that to happen has lost credibility with the media and ultimately the public.
- B. Identify a single spokesperson to ensure consistency of message.

2. Define the issue accurately.

Often, it is the media who define the issue at the outset of a crisis. The issue can shift quickly from, for example safety violation to history of cover-ups. It is vitally important to anticipate how the media will play a story so that you can be ready to immediately respond or to announce it before they do.

Crisis Communication Pitfalls

- *Failing to react quickly enough.* The first 24 hours are the most critical. Of that, the first 2 are the most critical.
- *Inadvertently prolonging the crisis* by failing to confront it head on, and failing to instantly grasping the real issue which is often being framed by the media and/or by critics.

3. Restore order as smoothly and quickly as possible.

Enlist a crisis communication management team to ensure accurate and consistent information, and to respond to media in a timely manner.

Media as a Communication Vehicle

During a crisis, news media can be of great assistance. Engage media as your partner in communicating your message. They can:

- Assist in pre-crisis education
- Warn audiences of a situation(s)
- Get your requests or information to the public
- Reassure the public
- Repudiate rumors
- Help the response
- Be a source of information for you
- Generate outside help

Common Questions in a Crisis

Following is a sampling of the questions that arise most often during a crisis. Be prepared to address these questions as well as anticipate and prepare for others specific to your situation.

- What happened?
- When and where?
- Who was involved?
- Why? What was the cause?
- How could you have allowed this to happen?
- What are you going to do about it?
- How much damage?
- Who is to blame?
- Do you accept responsibility? Liability?
- Has this ever happened before?
- What do you have to say to those who were injured? Inconvenienced?
- How does this affect your operations?

Youth Education Programs

The structured learning environment of the classroom is where much of our fundamental knowledge was gained and many of our basic views were shaped. Through schools and teachers, information reaches our society in one of the most accepted and positively reinforced venues. Teachers are a direct conduit to students. Working with teachers will enable you to access their expertise in child behavior and development as well as their knowledge of curriculum needs and requirements. With the aid of teachers, your message can be shaped into an age appropriate and contextually grounded part of the students' experience.

For the most part, teachers are seeking innovative ways in which to access information relevant to their curriculum guidelines. At the same time, educators around the country are under immense pressure to meet national and state education standards for curriculum development. Teachers are charged with meeting increasing requirements within the limited time frame of the academic year.

If you determine a school education program is right for your needs, reference the following sources for best practices to ensure your program fits the schools' needs and will be relevant by age group.

Education World: www.educationworld.com/standards

Education World is an online resource for national and state standards, among other information. Education World presents the objectives of the voluntary National Education Standards for the major subject areas:

- Fine Arts Standards
- Language Arts Standards
- Mathematics Standards
- Physical Education and Health Standards
- Science Standards
- Social Sciences Standards
- Technology Standards

USDA Forest Service Conservation Education (CE): www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/ce/index.cfm

The Conservation Education (CE) program supports education of teachers, students, and adults of all ages. Through structured educational experiences and activities targeted to varying age groups and populations, Conservation Education enables people to realize how natural resources and ecosystems affect each other and how resources can be used wisely.

The Forest Service offers a workshop titled: *Training Tools for Non-Formal Educators*. This workshop is designed to help non-formal educators (people who conduct conservation education activities) to better understand the culture of formal education. The course will help non-formal educators to understand the needs, background, language, and priorities of classroom instructors.

"Tools" learned at the workshop will help make your environmental education activities and programs more attractive to formal teachers. Each module has been constructed to fully engage the learner in sound, innovative educational activities. Those who complete the workshop will be able to address many of the issues that classroom teachers face today, including Learning Standards, Assessment, Learning Styles, and Multiple Intelligences. Also, techniques for correlating North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) Guidelines for Excellence to state curriculum standards will be discussed. "Training Tools" is a hands-on, fun workshop in which participants practice a variety of techniques and skills.

For more information, contact the USDA Forest Service National Conservation Education office in Washington, D.C.

North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE): <http://naaee.org>

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) promotes environmental education and supports the work of environmental educators. NAAEE uniquely combines and integrates both of these perspectives, and takes a cooperative, non-confrontational, scientifically-balanced approach to promoting education about environmental issues.

National Science Teachers Association: www.nsta.org

The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) is the largest organization in the world committed to promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all. NSTA's current membership of more than 55,000 includes science teachers, science supervisors, administrators, scientists, business and industry representatives, and others involved in and committed to science education.

Project Learning Tree® (PLT): www.plt.org

Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an award winning, multi-disciplinary environmental education program for educators and students in PreK-grade 12. PLT, a program of the [American Forest Foundation](http://www.americanforest.org), is one of the most widely used environmental education programs in the United States and abroad. PLT continues to set the standard for environmental education excellence.

Project WILD: www.projectwild.org

Project WILD is an award winning, supplementary, interdisciplinary, and instructional program for educators of students in kindergarten through high school. Its mission is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources. Project WILD is administered by the Council for Environmental Education, whose mission is to support environmental education through the management and development of environmental education programs; to publish and disseminate environmental education materials; and to facilitate the development and maintenance of partnerships for environmental education.

Project WET: www.projectwet.org

Project WET workshops focus on wetlands, watersheds, conservation, ground water, water quality, and other specific topics.

Weekly Reader: www.weeklyreader.com

Weekly Reader is a publisher of materials for elementary and secondary schools, with over 90 percent of the school districts in the United States using their materials.

Scholastic: www.scholastic.com/

Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, has a corporate mission supported through all of its divisions of helping children around the world to read and learn. Recognizing that literacy is the cornerstone of a child's intellectual, personal and cultural growth, for over 85 years, Scholastic has created quality products and services that educate, entertain and motivate children, and are designed to help enlarge their understanding of the world around them.

Youth Organizations

Beyond the classroom, other organizations can be highly effective in reaching young people without the restrictions of the formal education system. Following are a sampling of national organizations with local chapters. You may also want to explore local groups in your area.

- **Student Conservation Association:** www.thesca.org
- **Future Farmers of America:** www.ffa.org
- **Boy Scouts of America:** www.scouting.org/
- **Girls Scouts of the USA:** www.girlscouts.org/

- **Boys and Girls Clubs of America:** www.bgca.org/
- **YMCA:** www.ymca.net/
- **4-H:** www.4husa.org/index.php