



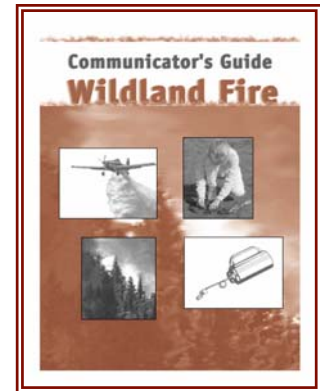
## Did You Know?

NWCG Wildland Fire Education Working Team  
Updates and Highlights from the *Communicator's Guide to Wildland Fire*

### Introduction

The *Communicator's Guide to Wildland Fire* is a product sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group to assist you in communicating the role of wildland fire with people of all ages and backgrounds, from children to adults, and from local businesses and communities to the news media. It is our hope that this guide provides you with the tools you need to reach your audience.

*Did You Know?* is designed to call your attention to some of the highlights in the guide and to let you know about new resources that have become available since the guide was written. The complete guide is available as a stand-alone CD-Rom, or on the Web at [www.nifc.gov/preved](http://www.nifc.gov/preved). If you have questions, please contact your agency's/organization's Wildland Fire Education Working Team representative listed on the NWCG site: [www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/roster.htm](http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/roster.htm).



### Did You Know ... The NWCG's Core Messages?

NWCG messages are available on pages 5 and 6 of the *Communicator's Guide*. However, the messages were revised in April 2004. The core messages listed below have been through an extensive interagency development and review process and have been approved by the NWCG. Supporting points for the messages are available on the NWCG website at [www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/key\\_message.pdf](http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/key_message.pdf).

- ❖ 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.



## Did You Know ... Where to Find Background Information About Fire?

You may already know the history of fire, but do you know where to find supporting materials you might need in your communications?

### Advice for Homeowners Living in Fire Prone Areas (Page 35)

- ❖ Use asphalt, fiberglass, concrete tile, clay tile, or class A, B, or C wood shingles.
- ❖ Clear all dead lower branches and space trees. Plant fire resistant shrubs and vegetation.
- ❖ Use brick, stone, or metals as alternatives to wood siding.
- ❖ If you live in a remote area, make sure firefighters can easily access your property.
- ❖ Beware of slopes.
- ❖ Ensure you have an independent water supply.

Additional information for homeowners is available at <http://www.firewise.org>.

- ❖ Fire Behavior – An overview of the combustion process and the factors influencing wildland fire behavior and the fire triangle (pages 7-11).
- ❖ Fire Effects – During a fire, the public's focus is immediately upon the "effects" of the fire. What's the impact on animals? The environment? Soil erosion? Air quality? The fire effects chapter helps you answer these important questions (begins on page 23).

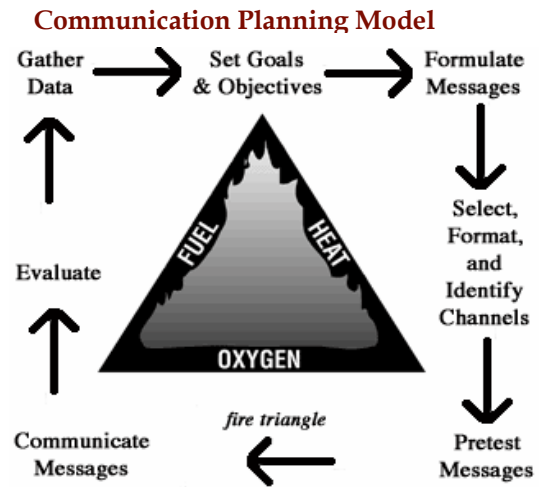
- ❖ I-Zone (Wildland/Urban Interface) – Substantial human presence near areas of fire-prone forest, brush, and grassland vegetation that has increased in years since World War II (page 33).
- ❖ We all know wildland fires happen. Can starting a fire really be a good thing? An overview of why sometimes it is necessary to start carefully planned fires to save further damage that might be caused by fires occurring in heavy fuel loads (pages 34 - 40).
- ❖ The benefits of fire (pages 48 - 53):
  - Mechanical removal.
  - Reduction of fire fuels like dead branches and leaves.
  - Recycling nutrients that might otherwise be trapped for long periods of time.
  - Stimulate the production of nutrients important for the reproduction of fire-dependent species.
- ❖ If we don't apply fire, avoiding prescribed treatments of the land leads to the following problems (page 57):
  - Change from relatively low damage, stand-maintenance fire to more severe high-damage, stand-replacement fires.
  - Conversion from fire-resistant species to fire-intolerant species having less resilience to fire disturbances.
  - Less controllable and more costly wildland fires.
  - Increasing danger to firefighters.
  - Growing threat to wildland/urban interface values where development is occurring in fire prone types.
  - Increasing potential for higher particulate matter emissions as fuel loads and understory biomass increase.



**Did You Know ... How to Start Building Your Communications Plan?**

Getting started is sometimes the biggest challenge of communicating about wildland fires. The *Communicator's Guide* can help you. In addition, the WFEWT is currently developing a "Best Practices" guide to provide additional tips and resources for developing a communications and media relations plan.

- ❖ To successfully communicate about wildland fires (page 61):
  - Understand your audiences' knowledge, attitudes, concerns, and needs about wildland fire and its management.
  - Incorporate evaluation into all of your activities and products.
  - Be creative in your approach to communication.
  - Develop wildland fire information packets for each audience (homeowners, media, community leaders, etc.).
  - Collaborate, especially with other wildland fire communicators and organizations.
  - Help reduce jargon by using easy to understand, commonly used language and terminology.
  - Keep people informed – fire is not something the public likes to be surprised about!



- ❖ Wildland fire management messaging must include both unplanned and prescribed fire as background. It is important the audience understands the issues associated with both types of fire (page 67).
- ❖ Public concerns and barriers to the acceptance of wildland fire in America's ecosystems (page 59):
  - Risk of fire, especially with the danger of damage.
  - Emissions from fire, including health and aesthetic effects.
  - Aesthetic impacts on the landscape.
  - Economic issues.
  - Impacts on the ecosystem, including wildlife.
  - Confused, disjointed or uncoordinated "messaging" about suppression.
  - Lack of consensus among "experts" regarding the use of fire.



## Did You Know ... Why it is Important to Educate Children about Wildland Fires? How to Reach Children?

- ❖ A 1989 survey found 71 percent of children aged 5-13 could recognize Smokey Bear and his fire prevention messages. Smokey's core message to the public continues to be that we all should help prevent accidental fire. Today the fire message is more complex than ever. We



must continue to effectively utilize fire prevention education – and Smokey's message is as relevant as ever. On the other hand, Smokey's message must be understood in context with the current, more comprehensive messages that focus on the ecologically and socially acceptable role of fire in the ecosystem. (page 69 and current NWCG message noted on page 1 of this document).

- ❖ Communicators must reach all groups – more than just homeowners and the media. Teachers and students are a very important audience because they are an important link to parents (pages 99-106).
- ❖ There is a great deal of information available to help you communicate with teachers and students, such as lessons plans, curriculum guides, research documents, and other resources (pages 107-146).



## Did You Know ... About examples of successful fire education initiatives?

Chapter 7 (pages 147-172) highlights several wildland fire education and outreach case studies, including a number of tips and resources that are available. Another source for materials is the NWCG Electronic Bibliography, available online:

<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/biblio/index.htm>.

## Did You Know ... The NWCG's Wildland Fire Education Working Team is working on additional resources?

Watch for periodic updates from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland Fire Education Working Team to fill you in on future products, tools and resources to assist you in communicating the role of fire in ecosystems. Visit [www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm](http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm) for more information. Sample materials include:

- *Wildland Fire in the United States* brochure, which presents an overview of methods of fire management as well as the ecological benefits of fire.
- *Wildland Fire: A Natural Process* PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet, which illustrate the role of wildland fire.
- Public Service Announcements.



*The Communicator's Guide to Wildland Fire was initially written, designed, and reproduced utilizing support from the USDA Forest Service and The Ohio State University in cooperation with the National Interagency Fire Center, National Wildfire Coordinating Group, and Wildland Fire Education Advisory Group in 2000. The document is now maintained by NWCG WFEWT.*