

National Wildfire Coordinating Group

Wildland Fire Education Working Team



NOW AVAILABLE – BEST PRACTICES: COMMUNICATION PLANNING

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP WILDLAND FIRE EDUCATION WORKING TEAM July 29, 2005

BEST PRACTICES: Communication Planning is a collection of planning concepts and examples to help you prepare effective communications plans that will support your wildland fire management programs.

Communication plays an integral role in wildland fire management. A clear plan can greatly enhance communication efforts – providing a road map to focus on the important issues and ensuring a consistent message and delivery to key audiences. *Best Practices: Communication Planning* will enable you to discover new methods or enhance your current practices. This product is now available on line at: <http://www.nwccg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm>

The document addresses the following concepts:

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

These concepts are outlined in the document and some example plans are included as reference tools. Remember – develop *your* plan based upon *your* specific needs.

For more information about the Wildland Fire Education Working Team contact your agency representative listed on the web site at:

<http://www.nwccg.gov/teams/wfewt/roster.htm>

Additional materials and resources can be found at:

<http://www.nwccg.gov/teams/wfewt/wfewt.htm>.

Sincerely,

Maureen Brooks

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**Best Practices
Communication Planning**
NWCG Wildland Fire Education Working Team

Communications... media relations... public awareness... How do I get started? What do I want to achieve? Who am I trying to reach? What's the difference between a strategy and a tactic? How can I be sure my tactics will help me meet my objectives?

These are just some of the questions we ask ourselves when embarking on a communication venture. Communication plays an integral role in wildland fire management, and a clear plan can greatly enhance communication efforts – providing a road map to focus on the important issues and ensuring a consistent message and 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.

Best Practices: Communication Planning is a collection of planning concepts and examples from a variety of sources, including federal and state agencies as well as professional communications firms. This document 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 dramatically different than that of a colleague, the principles of communication planning remain the same. This document 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 at: <http://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?

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