

Chapter -
Communication and Education
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A. Introduction

Facilitating, coordinating and supporting proactive and coordinated communication to internal and external audiences is not only part of the Bureau's trust responsibility, when we communicate effectively, internally and externally, all participants in Indian Country fire management improve the ability to preserve, protect and restore Indian Country resources. For this reason, the Fire Communication and Education Program is a key component of the BIA Branch of Wildland Fire Management (BWFWM).

Communication and Education needs vary depending on the specific program, the geographic area and the stated objectives. The intent of this chapter is to accomplish the following:

- Articulate DFWFM's commitment to communicate about wildland fire.
- Present a brief overview of communication planning, crisis communication, and media relations.
- Provide the Division's guidance on using Social Media and InciWeb
- Provide references and sample documents that can serve the fire community in the communication effort

Key guides recommended for fire management programs include the following:

- National Wildfire Coordination Group Communicator's Guide for Wildland Fire Management: Fire Education, Prevention and Mitigation Practices.
- Communicators Guide – For Federal, State, Regional and Local Communicators

A complete list of BIA Communication resources is located at the BIA-NIFC Website under "FireInfo" (<http://www.bia.gov/nifc/fireinfo/index.htm>). Additional guidance on prevention planning, analysis, and traditional prevention and education activities may be found in the Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide in the chapters on Fire Prevention (Chapter 5) and Fire Response (Chapter 12) (<http://www.bia.gov/nifc/bluebook/index.htm>).

B. Responsibilities

1. National Level

- a. Overseeing the DFWFM Fire Communication and Education Program and the day-to-day administration.
- b. Identifying and supporting service-wide priorities and fire management initiatives.
- c. Serving as an advocate for fire communication and education programs, media development, and comprehensive fire communication planning throughout the Branch.
- d. Providing interdisciplinary coordination with the Bureau-wide programs relative to fire management.
- e. Serving as a member of an interagency team to direct fire communication, education and information at the national level.

2. Regional Level

While there are no official positions at a Regional or Agency level who serve a permanent position in the capacity of a Communication and Education Specialist (Comm/Ed), the Bureau has several people who speak on behalf of the BIA fire community when media attention is turned to them. If fire activity warrants a Communication Specialist or a Public Information Officer (PIO), the responsibilities at the Regional level may include:

- a. Serving as a resource to Agencies in the Region and coordinating all matters relating to fire Comm Ed.
- b. Seeking interdisciplinary coordination with other regional programs relative to fire communication (Geographic Area Coordination Centers, and partner Public Affairs Officers (PAO)/Incident Information Officers (IIOs).
- c. Assisting Agencies in using ongoing communication and education strategies, consultation and collaboration to enhance the Branch programs.

3. Local Level

The local level has perhaps the most complex and important role in carrying forward the Wildland Fire Management messages because they must include and work in partnership with dynamic and multifaceted tribal governments and other federal agencies. A great deal of flexibility is given to how best to accomplish this; however, the following are recommended responsibilities to be completed by any employees who will be speaking on behalf of Wildland Fire Management Program.

- a. Fostering ongoing dialogue with the public (tribal or otherwise) to further Wildland Fire Management objectives.
- b. Contribute to regional and national goals.
- c. Share local information and products with Regional and National Resources.

B. Communication Planning

A clear communication plan enhances communication efforts by providing a road map to focus important issues, and ensures a consistent message and delivery to key audiences. A plan articulates the wildland fire messages so it can become heard and acted upon. It also builds support for fire management policies and practices.

This section is designed to provide an *outline of key concepts* that may be included in any communication plan, including fire situations.

- These plans are intended to be short and concise and be kept over the years so when an issue circulates back around, the original answers are available to draw from and maintain consistent messaging.
- Keep the document alive by adding to the Frequently Asked Questions as new ones are asked.

1. Key Concepts of a Fire Communication Plan include the following:

- Identifying the **Topic** to be addressed
- Frame the **Issue**
- Articulate **Key Messages**
- Plan and Identify **Questions and Answers**

- a. Topic - Identify what topic you wish to communicate.

Fictitious Example:

Topic: "Three-year Fort Apache Fuels Reduction Project"

Topic: "Human-caused Wildfires on the Pine Ridge Reservation"

- b. Issue - The "Issue" provides a brief background of what is taking place and frames why you are communicating the topic.

Fictitious Example:

Issue: On September 21, 2011, the Fort Apache fuels crew received \$300,000 to conduct a fuels reductions treatment project that will be completed over the next three years. This is the largest fuels project ever conducted on the Fort Apache Reservation. When the fuels project is complete, the communities of Whiteriver and East Fork will have a defensible fuels break that will protect the communities of Whiteriver, Arizona and provide over 150 jobs to local community residents.

- c. Key Messages

Key messages are general concepts that can be incorporated into discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information, and prevention efforts. Having a set of consistent, compelling messages for use in all proactive and reactive communications is a cornerstone of any communication effort.

Sample Key Messages:

- Safety of the public and firefighters is the top consideration in fire and aviation management.
- The BIA is committed to a balanced fire management program that will reduce risks and realize the benefits wildland fire may have.
- Native American communities wisely use wildland fire to manage landscapes to promote the growth and restoration of essential natural and cultural resources.
- Teamwork is necessary in wildland fire.

- d. Questions and Answers

To help prepare for what could be asked in a tribal council meeting, public interview or at an outreach event, develop a list of questions and answers you think you will be asked. It's best to prepare for the hard questions, so ask and answer them ahead of time to deliver the right message at the right time. Seeking assistance from subject matter experts to answer questions is very helpful and common.

Keep in mind, when speaking in nomex, you not only represent the BIA or your tribe, you may also be representing the interagency wildland fire community.

C. Crisis Communication

A *communication crisis* is often defined as an unplanned event that triggers a real, perceived, or possible threat to life, health and safety, the environment, financial status, or the organization's

credibility. Being prepared with a communication response plan *before* an actual event occurs is the best way to prepare for such unexpected and undesirable events.

In the unfortunate event of an accident, injury, fatality, or situation that warrants an investigation, refer to the Emergency Planning Section of the BIA website, located at: <http://www.bia.gov/nifc/safety/index.htm>. Additionally, refer Chapter 18 of the Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide for Serious Accident Investigation Protocols (<http://www.bia.gov/nifc/bluebook/index.htm>)

2. Communicating During a Crisis

In an immediate fire crisis, notifications need to be made at various levels throughout the origination. Providing accurate information is essential. The first 24 hours are critical, and the first 2 hours are the most critical.

1. Key Messages to Convey:

Knowing the right messages to convey at the right time will help you stay calm and focused. Important ideas to convey are:

- a. To communicate to the audience that fire managers recognize (or better yet, are the first in alerting them) about the problem.
- b. Express the fact that the Bureau cares about the impacts to the family, community and immediate partners. Identify who those audiences are (family, tribal programs, wildland fire community etc).
- c. Explain what managers are doing or will be doing to do to help mitigate the situation.

3. Two Goals of a Crisis Communication Plan

a. Control communication: Employ the front door strategy.

Successful organizations adopt the simple premise that open, accurate, and direct communication with the media is the most effective way to share information with the public, build trust, and prevent the spread of misinformation: “Come in the front door and you will get complete cooperation—that is, we’ll give you all you need to know as quickly as we know it.” Otherwise, if an organization closes the front door to the media, the media will try to get the information through a side window or a back door, and information obtained in that manner may be inaccurate and potentially damaging. An organization that allows this to happen loses credibility with the media and ultimately the public.

- In a crisis situation, define the issue quickly and accurately.
- Release the information (even if it is minimal) quickly and accurately.

Knowledge of the questions frequently asked in a crisis situation may assist in organizing and responding in an expedient manner:

- Who was involved? (*Caution: If the crisis involves an injury, fatalities, or potential investigation, obtain approval from family and agency and tribal leadership prior to releasing the names of those involved*).
- What happened?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- What was the cause?

- How could you have allowed this to happen? (*Remember, you are speaking on behalf of the Bureau*)
- What are you going to do about it?
- How much damage is there?
- Who is to blame? (*Caution: Recognize this question will be asked, but there may in fact be no responsible party and/or answering the question may be inappropriate if the incident warrants an investigation*).
- 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?
- What's next? (Timeline of events to occur).
- When will we know more? (Timeline of information releases to follow).

b. **Restore order as smoothly and quickly as possible.**

During a crisis, communication can become unruly. The best way to restore order quickly is to remember to *get help and get it early*. Doing so will have a critical impact in the long term.

Prepare for the issue to shift quickly—for example, from a safety violation to a history of cover-ups of poor management practices.

D. Media Relations

The news media are valuable partners in sharing fire management news with the public. If the BIA has a local public information officer available to assist in generating awareness of the fire management program, be sure to coordinate with the tribe to ensure messages and the timing of those messages are appropriate for release. Also confirm messages are something the tribes wish the public to know.

The following sections provide a media overview, news writing tips, and information on press kits.

1. General Guidelines

These guidelines should be followed when working with the media:

- *Be concise* when contacting media. Explain the event in 30 seconds and offer to e-mail or fax a media advisory.
- *Acknowledge deadlines*
- *Don't become a nuisance*. Once a reporter or editor has been contacted and has received the advisory, there is no need to call again unless there are changes.
- *Provide equal access*. Release the same information at the same time to everyone. Being labeled as a source that "plays favorites" damages credibility. The exceptions to this rule are when reporters call on their own initiative and want to do a story on a particular aspect of fire management, or when there is a story idea that fits a specific media outlet.
- *Encourage and facilitate site visits* by reporters when appropriate so they can see fire management techniques that are being or have been applied. Be sure to include the appropriate escorts, safety briefing, and direction on personal protective equipment.
- *Coordinate responses*. If the fire management program is currently facing any controversies that have caused backlash from media or the community, be sure to coordinate responses with the appropriate Tribe, Agency, regional, and national offices prior to releasing information.

2. Interview Guidelines

Arranging an Interview

When a station or newspaper contacts a representative of a Fire Management Program to arrange an interview, tell the reporter that having as much information as possible to prepare would be helpful. Ask the reporter the following questions:

- What is the name of the person who will likely be conducting the interview?
- Will the interview take place via phone, or in person?
- Is it preferable that the interview takes place in the studio or at the newspaper, or can the interview occur at a site related to fire management activity?
- What date and time will the interview be?
- How long will the interview last?
- What story angle will be explored?
- What kinds of questions are expected?
- *TV/radio only:* Will the interview be live or taped?
- *TV/radio only:* What time will they start taping/go on air?

Before the Interview

- Know the reporter, publication or program, interview format, and audience.
- Know the goal for the interview. What should the interview 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 the prepared message points.
- Prepare a range of potential questions that may be asked. Anticipate difficult questions.

Interview Tips—General

- Speak in “headlines.” Provide 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.
- 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 the 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 interrupt the interviewer’s question; begin the answer when the reporter is finished.
- Keep cool. Don’t be provoked.
- Never lie to a reporter.

- Do not speak “off the record.” Reporters are not obligated to refrain from publishing any information that has been shared, regardless of the nature of the conversation. Don’t share information with a reporter that the park would not be comfortable seeing in print or on the air.
- Do not say “no comment.” Let the reporter know that you are not in the position to respond to certain questions so that “no comment” does not become the sound bite 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.”

Tips for Telephone Interviews

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

Tips 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 or her, *not the camera*.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold an “interview attitude” from the moment the reporter and videographer arrive until they leave.

3. News Writing

a. News Releases

The news release is the tool most commonly used to generate news 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 a news release is being prepared, use the five “W’s” and the “H” to organize and present thoughts:

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

Avoid bureaucratic or technical jargon. Use small words.

A news release pertaining to wildland fire management should be formatted according to the DFWFM branding standards and appropriate approval from local agency and fire management officer is required before releasing information.

b. Media Advisories

The media advisory is used as an invitation to encourage media to cover press conferences,

media days, show-me tours, or special events. The advisory should be distributed two or three days prior to the event. Follow up by phone the day before the event and/or the morning of the event to encourage attendance.

e. Fact Sheets

A fact sheet is a simple, cost-effective method for sharing information about a specific topic. Often one or two pages and printed on an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper, a fact sheet can lay out the details of an issue or activity. Fact sheets also can be e-mailed as Microsoft Word or PDF files for immediate distribution. When developing fact sheets that may be shared electronically, convert them to PDF or use a Windows product such as Microsoft Word that most people are able to access.

f. Press Kit, Press Package, or Information Package

A press kit is a packet of information that can be used as an informational folder for special events or briefings. Press kits present recipients with accurate information and key messages provided by the BIA Fire Management Program, regional fire management officer, or the National Interagency Fire Center.

The contents of the information packet may include Agency and/or fire management history and accomplishments; profiles of key positions (i.e., burn boss, fire management officer, etc.); fact sheets; recent press releases; brochures; newsletters; website locations for additional information; business card and/or contact information; and photos in either hard copy or digitally on a CD.

Tips for a Quick Package

- Presentation is critical. The package need not be fancy, but it does need to be organized and concise. (More information may only serve to overwhelm the reader).
- Use a standard pocket folder to hold all information.
- Identify the press kit in some manner (adhesive sticker, illustrative photo stapled to the cover, etc.).
- Assemble all the information in a logical order. Consider a Table of Contents for the left and right side pockets which details the information found within the respective pockets.
- Insert a general Agency or an individual's business card in the slits of the pocket folder (if pre-cut slits exist), or staple the card to the folder pocket.
- Maintain general press kits on hand at the office so information is available to every news outlet and when significant visits occur.

D. InciWeb

Note: The face of InciWeb is in transition. The below guidance is based on 2011 InciWeb structure.

InciWeb is designed to serve the long term communication needs of the ***unit with jurisdiction over the land an incident occurs on*** (i.e. BIA Trust Lands, PL-638 Tribal Agencies, National Parks, Refuges, National Forests ect). To create or update incident records in InciWeb, you must receive access to the unit from a designated "Superuser."

For detailed information, see the InciWeb User's Manual, available online at: www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/background.html

Note: Superusers can also create and update incident records for their unit(s).

To create or update incident records in InciWeb, you will need:

*An InciWeb Login Account

*Access to the unit with jurisdiction responsible for administering the land.

1. Requesting an InciWeb Login Account:

- a. On BIA/Tribal trust lands, account manager information can be requested from the BIA Fire Communication and Education Specialist at NIFC (208) 387-5473 or the InciWeb Helpdesk. This person has Superuser rights for all existing BIA units. You will need to provide your email address to receive account login information.
- b. Alternatively, you may also contact the Fire Applications Helpdesk by phone at (866) 224-7677 or (360) 326-6002 or by email at fire_help@fs.fed.us. The Helpdesk can create your user account and help find the Superuser or account manager for the unit you are requesting access to. You will need to provide the Helpdesk with your email address so they can send your account login information to you. *It is recommended users provide two email addresses: an agency email address and a public email address (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) as a backup.*
- c. You will receive an email confirming the creation and activation of your InciWeb Login Account. The email will contain a username and a temporary password.
- d. Use the username and temporary password to log in to InciWeb (go to www.inciweb.org, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click "Log In" on the far right).
- e. Follow the directions on the Log In screen.

Note: After you enter your username, you must click the "login" button. If you hit "enter" instead, the username box will clear and you will need to retype your username. After you enter your password, you must click the "submit" button. If you hit "enter" instead, the password box will clear and you will need to retype your password.

- Follow the directions in the next section to gain access to the unit an incident occurs on.

2. Gaining access to a unit to create and update incident records:

- a. Log in to InciWeb with your username and password.
- b. You will be directed to the "Select a Unit" screen. *Note: All of the units you have been granted access to will appear in a drop down menu.*
- c. To create or update a record, select it from the drop down menu and proceed.
- d. If you are going to create or update an incident record for a unit you **have not** been granted access to, you will need to contact the unit's Superuser and request access.
 - To find the Superuser, click on "Superuser Lookup" and search by unit name (i.e. Southern Ute Agency, San Carlos Agency). The name, phone number, and email address for the Superuser(s) will appear.
 - If you cannot find a Superuser, or if the Superuser is unavailable or can't grant you access, contact the Helpdesk by (866) 224-7677 or (360) 326-6002 or by email at fire_help@fs.fed.us. A unit line officer will need to speak to a HelpDesk representative to authorize access.

3. Becoming a Superuser

Superusers can grant access to users to create and update records in InciWeb. Send an email to the BIA Fire Communication and Education Specialist stating you will be the Superuser. Include your:

- First and last name
- Email Address
- Alternate Email address (optional)
- Phone number
- Unit(s) you will be the Superuser for

Note: Superusers should be permanent BIA or tribal employees who can assign user access to temporary users when needed. They should be qualified Public Information Officers or a Tribal Public Affairs spokesperson familiar with the tribes they are Superusers for and who can speak to wildland fire management issues.

E. DFWFM Social Media Guidelines

To address the fast-changing landscape of the Internet and the way residents communicate and obtain information online, the BIA DFWFM will use social media tools to reach a broader audience. The DFWFM has an overriding interest in and expectation of what is "spoken" on behalf of Wildland Fire management on social media sites. This section establishes guidelines for the DFWFM use of social media.

2. Social Media Sites and Guidelines

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the only social media sites approved for use by DFWFM. If other Fire Management/ Forestry Programs would like to have a social media presence, work through the BIA-NIFC Fire Comm/Ed specialist, who will work with Indian Affairs OCIO for approval of social media sites related to Forestry and Wildland fire Management. Explanations of use for Facebook and Twitter are as follows:

a. What is Facebook and how do I use it?

Facebook is a social networking site which is widely used to promote activities, programs, projects and events. DFWFM web content managers are leveraging Facebook as a means to drive traffic to the bia/nifc/ website and to inform a broad audience about DFWFM activities. As Facebook and Twitter change, these standards may be updated as needed.

b. Content

- The DFWFM web content managers standardize and provide the Facebook page's image and design.
- A link to www.bia.gov/nifc/ or a more localized Agency website will be included on the Main Info page of the Facebook Site.
- BIA, NWCG, and other Federal Government pages will be page favorites of the DFWFM Facebook pages to promote partnership and visibility of interagency fire management programs.
- The DFWFM web content managers are responsible for monitoring the Facebook page. Posts will be approved by the Fire Comm/Ed Specialist and Division Foresters.
- DFWFM Facebook pages will be based on a template that includes consistent DFWFM and BIA branding.
- Facebook is more casual than most other communication tools but the page still represents DFWFM at all times.

b. What is Twitter and How Do I Use It?

Twitter is a micro blogging tool that allows account holders to tweet up to 140 characters of information to followers.

The hashtag for the BIA DFWFM Twitter account is @BIA_DFWFM. The Division will communicate information directly to Twitter followers, alerting them to news and directing them to bia.gov/nifc/ for more information.

- i. DFWFM will have only one Twitter account; tweets will be approved and posted by the DFWFM Web Content managers.
- ii. The Twitter account shall serve three primary purposes:
 - Get emergency information out quickly
 - Promote DFWFM and BIA events and programs
 - Refer followers to content hosted at www.bia.gov/nifc/
- iii. Information posted on Twitter shall conform to the policies and procedures of IA and DOI. Tweets shall be relevant, timely and informative.
- iv. Twitter content will mirror information presented on bia.gov/nifc/ and other existing information dissemination mechanisms. DFWFM Web Content managers must ensure information is posted or “tweeted” correctly the first time. Twitter does not allow for content editing.

3. A Cohesive Media Strategy

The overall goal of using social media tools is to reach a broader audience, and to point that audience to the news, information and opportunities on bia.gov/nifc/. To do this, we must use our social media sites routinely and with consistent messages and marketing. To that end, the posts, tweets, status updates and any other web-based communications need to tie in together, have a similar look and feel and be identifiable as belonging to the BIA DFWFM. For example:

- a. When a BIA-NIFC video is posted on YouTube about fire season, there should also be a Twitter post or tweet mentioning the video and a link to YouTube. In addition, the Facebook page will also have a link to the YouTube video and a link to a bia.gov/nifc/ page (or the <http://www.youtube.com/BLMNIFC> page if there is limited bandwidth), that has fire season information. The YouTube video would also have a link to the same bia.gov/nifc/ page. This way, there is a consistent message that markets both the DFWFM social media sites and bia.gov site.
- b. On any given day, at a minimum, the DFWFM web content staff will post one item to Facebook, and when available, Twitter. Both the Twitter and Facebook posts (and Tweets) will either refer the viewer back to the DFWFM or NIFC internet site (bia.gov/nifc/) or will provide Indian Country with other pertinent fire information provided by BIA’s interagency fire management partners.
- c. In addition, each news release that is distributed will follow the DFWFM Branding Standards outlined in the next section.
- d. Not only does this effort seek to tie all the social media sites together, it also seeks to tie DFWFM to other IA Programs and Interior agencies. Ultimately, the goal is to use these new outreach tools to pull the viewer back to the BIA-NIFC internet site where the bulk of the content exists.

F. DFWFM Branding Standards

All documents released to the media must follow the DFWFM branding guidelines. This includes providing:

- The Bureau of Indian Affairs logo
- The Division of Wildland Fire Management logo
- BIA agency address and contact information
- The name and phone number of a fire management specialist a media inquiry can contact.
- The conclusion of the release will be indicated by: “###”
- The www.bia.gov/nifc/ website link
- The DFWFM Facebook and Twitter links, which can be hyperlinked to the Facebook and Twitter icons
- The website link where the release can be found if published and posted online
- The DFWFM footer:

Protecting Human Life | Restoring Cultural Landscapes | Supporting Indian Self Determination



G. Tools, Resources, and References

There are many documents and tools available to assist with fire communication and education, depending on the need. Below is a short listing of documents and other resources. The actual URLs are provided in appendix 1 as web links:

- *Agency Administrator’s Guide to Critical Incident Management*
- *A Guide to Successful Media Interviews*
- *Department of the Interior Interagency Memo, Interagency Media Guidelines for Wildland Fire, dated April 13, 2004*
- *Director’s Order 50B: Occupational Safety and Health Program* (currently undergoing revisions)
- *Firewise Communities Communication Guide*
- *Incident Response Pocket Guide*
- Information Officer PIO Bulletin Board
- *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*
- Lessons Learned Website
 - Lessons Learned Center Library—Fire Education
- Line of Duty Death Protocol
- InciWeb User Guide
- Indian Affairs Social Media Guidelines (intranet only)