



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
Washington, DC 20240

MAY 14 2012

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors  
Attention: Forestry/Fire Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Wildland Fire Media Relations Guidance

Promoting Indian self-determination and protecting lives, property, and resources while restoring and maintaining healthy ecosystems through cost-effective and creative fire-management programs and collaboration is BIA's fire management mission. To fulfill this mission, the following guidance regarding the release of wildland fire related media information is intended to provide clear direction for agency Line Officers, unit Fire Management Officers and local prevention and fuels specialists. This guidance clarifies the 90 IAM 1.2A (15) which states:

*"The Bureau will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations."*

### Clarifying Guidance

During dynamic events such as wildland fire, providing accurate information is critical for public safety. To be effective, communication must be timely, if not immediate. For this reason, news bulletins and routine fire information pertaining to the topics listed below are authorized for media release on behalf of the BIA, Division of Wildland Fire Management (DFWFM).

For cases that may include multiple agency jurisdictions, these news releases are also approved for use.

The DFWFM media release template and approved supporting fire messages can be found on the BIA-NIFC SharePoint Site inside the Indian Affairs Collaboration Tool (IACT):

<https://sp.ia.doi.net/sites/BIA/ots/dfwfm/nifc/comm/DFWFM%20Public%20Relations%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Local units are encouraged to tailor messages to meet individual unit needs; however, the template should not be altered except to revise address, contact names and phone numbers. All documents released to the media must follow the DFWFM branding. This includes providing:

- The Bureau of Indian Affairs Logo
- The Division of Forestry and 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: “#BIA-FIRE#”
- The [www.bia.gov/nifc/](http://www.bia.gov/nifc/) website link
- The DFWFM Facebook Link
- 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*

It is strongly recommended, but not required, that field specialists who are asked to speak to the media successfully complete basic Fire Information Officer training (S-203) and be a minimally qualified Public Information Officer, Type 3 (PIOF). During complex situations, if an Information Officer is unavailable on the home unit, the Agency can always order a qualified individual through the interagency dispatch system.

**Table of Approved Wildland Fire Management Topics for Media Release**

<b>Wildland Fire Prevention</b>	<b>Fire Operations, Fire Use, and Fuels Management</b>	<b>Burned Area Emergency Response</b>	<b>Training</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Danger Alerts</li> <li>• Fire Restrictions/Burn Bans</li> <li>• Burn Permits</li> <li>• Fire Preparedness Activities</li> <li>• WeTip</li> <li>• FIREWISE</li> <li>• Arson Prevention</li> <li>• Juvenile Fire Setter Prevention</li> <li>• Seasonal and Holiday Wildfire Precautions</li> <li>• Outdoor Cooking</li> <li>• Debris Burning</li> <li>• Campfire Safety</li> <li>• Fireworks Safety</li> <li>• Equipment/Vehicle Safety</li> <li>• Other specific Wildland Fire Prevention Message specific to a home unit that may target a <i>cause</i> of wildland fire starts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evacuations</li> <li>• Road Closures</li> <li>• Smoke in Area</li> <li>• Fire equipment use</li> <li>• Incident Management Team Mobilizations/ Status updates</li> <li>• Multiple objectives being met through use of natural wildfires.</li> <li>• Prescribed Fire Planned/Complete</li> <li>• Mechanical Treatment Planned/Complete</li> <li>• Annual Refresher Announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BAER Team Status updates</li> <li>• Closures</li> <li>• Treatment Planned/ Completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiring Season</li> <li>• Administratively Determined Announcements</li> <li>• Special Training Sessions</li> <li>• Indian Country Fitness Challenge</li> </ul>

**Restrictions**

For serious accidents or fatalities that occur while on a wildland fire, Agency Administrators must follow the guidance outlined in Chapter 18 of the Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide.

Any topics outside the scope of local level fire management activities as listed above are NOT authorized for release without following established protocols. This includes commentary on fire policy or any fire management issues that are regional or national in scope.

Fire management related questions that are regional or national in scope, the local unit will defer to the Regional Office who can contact the Fire Communications Specialist at NIFC for wildland fire specific information/media response or the Indian Affairs Communications Director for guidance / media response.

Contact Robyn Broyles, Fire Communication and Education Specialist at (208) 387-5473 for questions pertaining to this guidance.

**Attachments**





## Bureau of Indian Affairs Incident Communications Guidance



- The BIA local unit is responsible for the content of fire communications during and after a fire. Public Information Officers (PIOs) must coordinate continually with the local BIA Agency Superintendent and when available, the Tribal Public Affairs Officer (PAO). Delegations of Authority will stress the importance of line officer responsibility for all fire communications, regardless of medium.
- InciWeb ([www.inciweb.org](http://www.inciweb.org)) is a critical source of information about fires occurring on trust lands for external and internal audiences. Information about fires of interest to the news media, elected officials, senior BIA and DOI leadership, and other important stakeholders should be posted on InciWeb as soon as possible after the incident begins. Fires may be considered *high profile* due to location, homes and safety impacts, or political interests, even if they are small. Information should include jurisdiction—whether the incident is on trust lands, other jurisdictions, or a combination. For information about establishing an InciWeb account, contact the Help Desk by phone at (866) 224-7677 or by email at [helpdesk@dms.nwcg.gov](mailto:helpdesk@dms.nwcg.gov)
- The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group has developed 2012 Fire Season Communication Themes and the BIA has provided additional 2012 Fire Season key messages. These are available online at <http://www.bia.gov/nifc/fireinfo/index.htm> and [http://www.nifc.gov/fire\\_info/PIO\\_bb/Agencies/fs.html](http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/PIO_bb/Agencies/fs.html). Regional and local PIOs working on incidents on trust lands are encouraged to use the themes and key messages to guide fire communications. As needs arise, NIFC and Central Office can provide additional messages.
- On fires on trust lands, PIOs work for the BIA, even if they are not regular BIA employees. PIOs on incidents can respond to questions from all news media, including national news media, ***about the incident only***. PIOs will refer all news media questions that are broader in scope than the incident they are working on to the local Fire Management Officer, who will determine whether they can be addressed locally, or whether they should be referred to the BIA regional office; to Robyn Broyles, Fire Communications Specialist for BIA Wildland Fire Management at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). Robyn Broyles can be reached by phone at her office at (208) 387-5473 or on her mobile phone at (208) 559-1187 or by email at [Robyn.Broyles@bia.gov](mailto:Robyn.Broyles@bia.gov)
- When a national level VIP visit is scheduled or expected on an incident, or occurs by surprise, PIOs or PAOs should coordinate with the Agency Administrator, tribal government, and Robyn Broyles at NIFC as soon as possible.
- 2012 is an election year. The White House, Department, and BIA Fire Director may require frequent updates from incidents with media and political potential. PIOs should be ready to establish and prioritize an information stream to NIFC and Central Office with the eastern time zone in mind. It may be necessary to assign one or two individuals to this task. Please contact Robyn Broyles at NIFC with questions or to establish this information feed.





**Bureau of Indian Affairs–National Interagency Fire Center**  
**Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management**  
BIA Wildland Fire Management National Themes



- **BIA Fire Management is dedicated to Indian Self-Determination and developing tribal fire management programs.**
  - In collaboration with tribal governments, the BIA strives to restore and protect the natural and cultural resources contained within tribal trust lands.
  - BIA and Tribal employees work together in Indian Country to protect and manage the federal land held in trust for our federally recognized tribes.
  
- **When a wildfire occurs on tribal lands, it often threatens communities of people who depend on the natural resources for their livelihood.**
  - Providing a safe, effective and well-trained initial attack fire suppression force to protect economical, cultural and natural resources is essential for BIA Fire Management.
  - BIA and tribes jointly manage aviation resources to aid in the safe and timely response to unwanted wildfires.
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- **The BIA and Tribal Wildfire Prevention programs across the country provide leadership, training and guidance to develop strategies for reducing the number of human caused fires on Indian Reservations.**
  - Arson is the main source of wildfires in Indian Country. The BIA and the tribes are especially concerned with how to deal with human-caused wildfires because all citizens deserve to have a safe, wildfire-free community.
  - The BIA teamed up with WeTip, a national non-profit organization that offers a 24/7 telephone tip hotline (**1-800-472-7766**) for people to report information anonymously.
  - Remember – the life, property and resources you save, may be your own.
  
- **Fire is essential to maintaining healthy and productive ecosystems, which sustains and restores natural and cultural resources.**
  - Indian Country has long recognized the wise and cultural use of fire as a significant process responsible for shaping habitat, structure and functions to meet indigenous people’s daily needs.
  - The majority of trust lands have evolved with fire and no other land management tool can fully duplicate or mimic its ecological benefits.
  - The BIA strives to use the best science available to create diverse ecological and cultural landscapes.
  - Controlling the spread of many invasive plants is a key to reducing fire risk and maintaining the health of native ecosystems.
  
- **Fire is a cost-effective tool for managing natural and cultural resources.**
  - Indigenous cultures have an intrinsic tie to their land and resources and therefore understand the social, economic and ecological benefits of fire.
  - BIA Fire Management invests in reducing hazardous conditions because in the long run, fuels reduction lowers suppression and emergency rehabilitation costs, and ultimately, protects the resources the tribes most value.
  - The use of prescribed fire and suppression strategies that allow fire to play a more natural role in Indian Country helps meet Bureau and tribal goals by creating safer communities for people.

## Tips for Use:

Each of the core messages listed can be used by BIA Fire Management communicators in a variety of settings and with a variety of audiences. These messages are designed to be used as a guide-- not a script. They should be fluid, depending on the situation. Consider the following tips when communicating with your audience:

- **Provide additional, local detail to ensure the messages touch audiences in a relevant, credible way.** *Example: Crow Reservation provides a safe, effective and well-trained initial attack fire suppression force to protect game, recreation and tourism industry the Crow citizens depend on for their economical, cultural and natural resources.*
- **Messages should motivate the audience to act on what they have learned.** *Example: Every year, wildfires on the Colville Nation threaten lives, burn homes, damage sacred places and destroy timber resources. Before starting a fire, contact Colville Fire Management at -- to determine your community's fire conditions and learn tips to reduce your fire vulnerability.*
- **Categorizing the messages by what, why and how will help you recall the messages.** You may also consider adding "who," "when" and "where" in relation to specific initiatives. *Example: (What) Today's mastication project will remove excess vegetation in the Little Dear Campground. (Why) Dense build-up of vegetation can lead to fires that burn hotter, last longer and spread faster. As a result, these fires become difficult to manage and can threaten areas where people live. (How) We are working with the Mescalero tribal government and local property owners to make their land and property more defensible against wildfire.*