



US Forest Service 2011 Incident Communications Guidance

- InciWeb (www.inciweb.org) is funded and managed by the US Forest Service to serve as a critical source of information about fires occurring on National Forest System lands for external and internal audiences. Information about fires of interest to the news media, elected officials, senior US Forest Service and USDA 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 the fire is small. Information should include jurisdiction—whether the incident is on national forest, private lands, other jurisdictions, or a combination. For information about establishing an InciWeb account, contact the Help Desk by phone at (800) 253-5559 or by email at fire_help@fs.fed.us
- On fires on National Forest System lands, Public Information Officers (PIOs) work for the US Forest Service, even if they are not regular US Forest Service 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 not about the incident they are working on to the local National Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO), who will determine whether they can be addressed locally, or whether they should be referred to Jennifer Jones, Public Affairs Specialist for the US Forest Service at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), or to the US Forest Service Washington Office Press office. Jennifer Jones can be reached by phone at her office at (208) 387-5437 or on her mobile phone at (208) 631-0406 or by email at jejones@fs.fed.us
- The US Forest Service local unit is responsible for the content of fire communications during and after a fire. PIOs must coordinate continually with the local National Forest PAO and/or line officer. Delegations of Authority will stress the importance of line officer responsibility for all fire communications, regardless of medium (see below).
- Social media for incidents on National Forest System lands must be used in compliance with the following US Forest Service and USDA guidance:
 - Facebook pages are not approved for the US Forest Service. PIOs or other Incident Management Team members will not create Facebook pages for fires on National Forest System lands.
 - Tweets from Twitter accounts must alert followers that new information is posted on a website managed by those responsible for the content, such as InciWeb, a National Forest website, or a cooperator's website.
 - Videos may be posted on YouTube only on the US Forest Service channel. Videos from incidents must be routed to the US Forest Service Washington Office Office of Communication to be posted on the US Forest Service YouTube channel.

- Photographs may be posted on Flickr only on the USDA site. Photographs from incidents must be routed to the US Forest Service Washington Office, Office of Communication to be posted on the US Flickr site.

Additional information about the US Forest Service social media guidance is available in the New Media Guides Volumes 1 and 2, online at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/pao/> and at http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/PIO_bb/Agencies/fs.html

- NIFC is key in fire communications. If news media are interested in information beyond a specific fire and its management, the PIO should refer questions to the local National Forest PAO. If the question is about a national fire related issue, the local National Forest PAO should refer it to Jennifer Jones at NIFC. The local National Forest PAO and NIFC will be tied-in to the Forest Service Washington Office Press Office, which will coordinate with the USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment and the USDA when necessary.
- The US Forest Service has signed on to the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group's 2011 Fire Season Communication Themes and has provided additional US Forest Service 2011 Fire Season key messages. These are available online at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/> and at http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/PIO_bb/Agencies/fs.html. News media questions that go beyond the 2011 Fire Season Communication Themes or US Forest Service key messages should be referred to the local National Forest PAO, who will determine whether they can be addressed locally or whether they should be referred to Jennifer Jones at NIFC. As needs arise, NIFC and the US Forest Service Washington Office Press Office can provide additional messages.
- When a VIP visit is scheduled or expected on an incident, or occurs by surprise, PIOs or PAOs should notify Leo Kay (Leo F Kay/WO/USDAFS, 202-205-1470) Jennifer Jones at NIFC and Becky Rine in the WO as soon as possible. (brine@fs.fed.us, 202-205-0955, or 202-731-1941)