SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

WILDFIRE PREVENTION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES TECHNICAL GUIDE

BIA WILDFIRE PREVENTION
TECHNICAL GUIDE # 5
Version 1.1

OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT
Branch of Wildland Fire Management

FOREWORD

This BIA Wildfire Prevention Technical Guide provides guidance, checklists and references for conducting fire prevention communications in a wide variety of formats, most likely to be used by Indian Country prevention programs.

Communications is a vital part of the overall methodology for all Indian Country educational and prevention efforts. Consistent guidance and reference materials provided by this guide help improve the professionalism and overall quality of these efforts.

This guide is largely based on several of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's (NWCG) Prevention Guides. These guides are no longer supported by the NWCG and are considered obsolete; however, much of that material is still current and has been used in the text of this guide. The NWCG's Fire Communication and Education, PMS-458 provided much of the text used in this BIA guide. The other NWCG Guides used in developing this publication are:

PMS-451 NWCG Marketing Fire Prevention Guide
PMS-452 NWCG Event Management Guide
PMS-453 Wildfire Prevention Conducting School Programs Guide
PMS-454 Wildfire Prevention and the Media
PMS-459 NWCG Fire Education Exhibits and Displays
NWCG Communicator's Guide for Wildland Fire Management: Fire Education, Prevention, and Mitigation Practices

The BIA Wildfire Prevention program gratefully acknowledges the information provided by the NWCG, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and many others that was used in developing this document.

Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

Every Indian Country wildland fire employee should be knowledgeable about wildland fire communication, education, and marketing practices; how they relate to ecosystem management; and to the organization's policy and practices. Whenever federal agency and Tribal employees answer questions from the public, work with a contractor, help a hiker locate a landmark on a map, respond to a letter, or answer the telephone; they are communicating with the public. The response, whether good or bad, is often retained. Days, months, or even years later, these persons may decide to support, or oppose a fire management program based on the impressions they formed during that individual contact.

These kinds of communication are at the foundation of the fire organization's reputation, and are some of the most effective tools in forming viable land management decisions and policies.

As the growing population turns increasingly to the wildlands and its many diverse resources, opportunities for making one-to-one contacts with the public will increase. To be successful, prevention personnel must be prepared to take advantage of these opportunities.

Marketing wildfire prevention has also grown to become more than just random individual contacts. As the population base has become more centralized in urban areas, individuals have increasingly less opportunity to interact with agency representatives.

PURPOSE

Fire prevention education is aimed at changing people's behavior, through awareness and knowledge. It provides an understanding of the role of fire in natural processes. It can increase credibility with customers, leading to further program successes. The information in this document, along with appropriate agency policy, provides the guidance needed to plan and conduct an effective fire education program.

STANDARDS

With any activity in wildland fire, there are standards. There are standards for incident position qualifications, equipment typing, physical fitness, and even operating a vehicle. Wildfire prevention communications is no different. There are a few universal standards and some specific standards that apply.

Wildfire prevention communications must be:

Truthful: Wildfire prevention personnel must ensure the information provided by their communications efforts protects the integrity of their organization. Wildfire prevention communications must not be intentionally misleading, biased, or otherwise deceitful.

Likewise, prevention communications must avoid the use of unrealistic scare tactics to emphasize their messages.

Factual: Wildfire prevention personnel must ensure that the information they provide is based on established facts from scientific or historical sources. Information should never be portrayed as factual, if based on rumors, speculation, or opinion. Prevention personnel should avoid exaggerating fire conditions to increase impact.

Respectful: Wildfire prevention communications must be compassionate and respectful. As a nation of many cultures, cultural sensitivity is necessary. Wildfire prevention communications must remain objective, and avoid blaming or using accusatory language.

Contemporary: The information provided by wildfire prevention communications must have utility. Historical messages may, or may not apply to current situations and events. Delivery methods that were standard practice fifteen years ago, may be obsolete today. Therefore, the information and delivery methods must have relevance and be applicable to the situational needs.

Understandable: Prevention communications must use plain language. They should avoid the use of jargon, or unexplained acronyms. If a one syllable word has the same meaning as a three syllable word; the one syllable word should be used.

Professionally delivered: Wildfire prevention communications represent their organization to the public. They are not personal expressions. Everything from the personal appearance, grooming, and dress of prevention personnel, to their language usage, and cleanliness of exhibit materials are part of the image of the organization. Prevention personnel must never use slang, curse words, or vulgar language when conducting prevention communications activities. Emotional displays, no matter how deeply felt, can leave an impression that the organization is undisciplined.

Within the scope of authority: Wildfire prevention communications must be delivered within the scope of the prevention personnel's authority. It is the prevention personnel's responsibility to firmly identify the scope of their authority for each of the communications activities they are engaged in. The scope of authority most likely changes from school programs, to event participation, to press releases and interviews. Prevention personnel must never be drawn into commenting publically on national fire management policy, agency administration, political candidates, or elected officials.

II. COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

The old adage, "those who fail to plan, plan to fail", certainly applies to wildland fire communications. Systematic communication planning is necessary for wildland fire messages to become heard, acted upon, and to impact policy and practice. While communication planning is not a universal solution, it will help in identifying target audiences, key messages and ensuring a consistent delivery.

COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

A communication plan is a road map to delineate important issues and ensure consistent message 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.

The format of the plan depends largely on its intended purpose. In this guide, one format is recommended for the overall prevention program, and a different format is recommended for events or campaigns.

Programmatic Plans

The programmatic communications plan helps define the authorities, techniques and purposes for prevention communications efforts. It serves as a quick reference when questions arise among Tribal or Agency staff about why the prevention program is conducting a communications activity.

The following is a good basic format for a *programmatic* communications plan.

Cover or Title Page with the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and a signature line for approval. Signatures can also be maintained on a separate page to track period reviews.

Purpose. This is a short section explaining the intended purpose for the Communications Plan.

Authorities (Policies, Protocols and Procedures). This section establishes the BIA Agency or Tribal spokesperson, and lists any directions to the prevention staff for limitations on their authority to work with the media. This section should list the BIA Agency or Tribal personnel that may need to be notified in advance of a news release or possible story.

Key Audiences. This section identifies the targeted audiences for fire prevention communications.

Tactics. This section connects the communications actions in the WFPP to the Communications Plan and expands on how they will be implemented.

Cooperators and Contact Information. This section should provide a list of media outlets, cooperating agencies, and organizations as well as their contact information.

Key Messages. This section lists any pre-approved key messages for the prevention program to include in interviews, news releases, or speaking events.

Evaluation. This section discusses how the effectiveness of the prevention communications will be measured.

Appendix. The appendix includes copies of any special guidance or policy memos, affecting prevention communications and media relations. It should also include any templates for public service announcements or news releases.

Event or Campaign Communication Plans

The *event or campaign* plan is a plan that may be needed to guide the staff or cooperators in implementing a complex communications event or campaign. It may also be needed to explain to Tribal or Agency administrators what the prevention effort is trying to achieve.

Executive Summary: Develops a summary of the situation and identifies goals

Purpose of the plan: Identifies the purpose of this plan. For example:

- The purpose of this plan is to …

Objectives: Identifies the key objectives/expectations of this event or campaign. For example: This campaign will:

- Increase public awareness of human-caused fires, with the intent to encourage individuals to take an active role in reducing the occurrence of human-caused wildfires.
- Target and reach as broad an audience as possible.
- Give materials and messages to member agencies to be used on the local level.

Key Messages/Talking Points: Lists the major emphasis messages to be used in this event or campaign.

Examples are:

- Homeowners can increase their chances of surviving a disastrous fire by planning ahead.
- Keeping campfires and debris burning from getting out of control takes only a few simple steps.

Target Audiences: Identifies those key audiences requiring attention in this area.

- Residents of interface areas
- Children and Parents

- Youth group leaders
- Hunters

Key Contacts: Identifies those key contacts/individuals important to this effort.

Partners: Identifies any partners that are important to this effort.

Action Plan; This section identifies specific tasks, assigns responsibilities and due dates.

Example:

1. Develop campaign printed material; BIA Prevention; Due Nov. 1
2. Coalition review of campaign material; Coalition; Due Nov. 7
3. Arrange for community meeting on Feb. 1; Community elder; Due Jan 1
4. Print 2000 copies of campaign materials; BIA Prevention; Due Jan. 15
5. Conduct community meeting; Coalition; Due Feb. 1
6. Homeowner follow-ups; BIA Prevention; Due Feb 28

Budget: Provides cost estimates for any expenses and sources of funding.

Evaluation: A post- event evaluation provides an opportunity to learn from successes and failures.

CAUSE IDENTIFICATION

Possibly the most important step in planning a communications campaign or strategy is to identify the cause category, or categories, the communications effort will attempt to reduce. Primary cause categories may provide all of the information needed for some causes; however, more useful information may be found by drilling down to the specific causes.

Classifying fires into intentional and accidental categories may also be useful. Additional data such as the age of responsible parties may also help in planning communications efforts.

MARKET RESEARCH

The second most important step in planning a communications effort is to identify the target audience(s) and develop a profile for each. This profile will help plan what messages can be used and how to best deliver them.

Target audiences are both internal, and external. A common mistake is to overlook the importance of internal target audiences. With any prevention campaign, educational or communications effort, ***there can be many*** target audiences. A careful analysis should help identify the ones where the communications effort will be most effective.

When developing a profile of the target audiences, the following should be considered:

- Internal vs. external;

- Basic demographics (age, race, gender);
- Resident vs. non-resident;
- Tribal vs. non-tribal;
- Their reasons for interacting with the wildlands; and
- How they use the wildlands.

This information can come from surveys, statistical research, observations, experience and intuitive deduction. However, care must be taken to avoid projecting personal biases onto the target audiences.

Regardless of the methods used, it is crucial that prevention personnel develop a thorough, in-depth, and unbiased picture of the target audiences for any communications efforts.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The following factors when developing tactics and key messages should be considered:

- Target audience analysis
- Social and cultural context
- Political context
- Economic and ecological considerations
- Timeliness of messages
- Public trust levels
- Concerns for public and firefighter safety
- Messaging opportunities
    - Applicable and appropriate national/regional/local campaigns and initiatives
    - Events inventory
    - Media outlets inventory
    - Educational system inventory
    - Social media and web page capacity
    - Billboard and electronic message board availability
    - Sign and bulletin board inventory

III. Messages

The cornerstone of any communication program is a set of consistent, compelling messages for use in all proactive and reactive communications. Complete messages should be actionable so that, in addition to educating, they will motivate the audiences to act on what they have learned.

Key messages are general concepts organizations want to deliver in their communications efforts. They are umbrella statements that require additional supporting points and examples for context. For example, a key message might be "Fire danger is extreme. Use extra precautions with outdoor activities." However, without additional supporting points, this message does not inspire specific actions.

Supporting points provide the detail for key messages. They further explain, educate and expand on a key message to connect the message with the intended audience. From the preceding example, some supporting messages might be:

- Drought is at historic levels. Precipitation over the last three months is 25% of normal.
- Dormant grasses, leaf litter and needle cast will ignite easily,
- Campfires, bonfires and charcoal grills are prohibited. Gas grills and lanterns are allowed.
- Drive only on paved and gravel roads. Park only in designated parking areas.

NWCG's Key Messages for Fire Management

In 2004, the NWCG developed a set of key messages and supporting points for wildland fire organizations to use in building their communications strategies. They were developed to help the public to better understand the complexity of wildland fire issues facing the nation. They are not a script. It is intended that users of these messages incorporate them, in their own words, adapted to fit their local situations. The NWCG Key Messages and supporting points are included in Appendix A. They can be used as a model for fire prevention and education messages. Appendix B provides a worksheet for developing Key Messages.

Message Development Tips

- Key messages and supporting points should be **simple**, **short** and as **direct** as possible.
  - They shouldn't have too much information or extra words.
- They should be **relevant**. The message should be about a real issue that people can relate to.

- They should be **important**. Key messages should be about the most important issues, rather than minor ones.
- They should be **worded positively**. Avoid fear tactics or exaggerated language.
- They should use **plain language**. They shouldn't use technical terms, jargon or multi-clause sentences.
- They should be the **right message for the situation and audience**.
- They should keep key messages and supporting points used in graphics to **six words or less.**

Once key messages and supporting points are developed, they should be tested. When testing it is important to determine if the message is clear, and conveys a need to take action. Also, it is important to determine if the message that was received is consistent with what was intended. After the messages are tested and agreed to, everyone who might need to know them, should have access to and fully understand the messages.

Surveys conducted nationally identify two distinct audiences, urban residents and rural residents. Each has a unique baseline of knowledge, experience, values, and attitudes. While these two groups seem easy to identify, they become mixed in the wildland urban interface.

Previous research has shown that both groups require different approaches with key and sub-messages, and different delivery methods. Generally, efforts to inform and persuade are more effective and possible with **rural** populations in a small group setting using messages that primarily address:

- Safety
- Preparations (air quality, fire control, etc.)
- Utility or purpose (including aesthetics)
- Prevention of future catastrophic fires

Urban residents generally are best reached through mass media outlets and the internet with messages that focus on:

- Resource protection
- Ecosystem health
- Aesthetics
- Recreation

Partners in Fire Education (PIFE) found that today's publics are sophisticated in their understanding of wildland fire issues. They understand that suppressing all wildland fires can lead to undesirable fuel accumulations, eventually resulting in uncontrollable wildfires. PIFE developed the following recommendations for wildland fire communicators.

- Do not use acronyms and phrases which are technical in nature.
- Reassure citizens that safety of the public, of fire fighters, and of property is the chief priority for you and your organization when considering approaches to fire.
- Understand that citizens do not want to be told that their homes may not be protected.
- Incorporate impacts on or benefits to people into all communications, for example by clearly demonstrating how people will be affected by any changes in the approach taken to fire. (i.e. Messages that do not include people may be seen as placing natural systems needs above the needs of people.)
- Recognize that the public understands and accepts intellectually that fire can be beneficial, and that putting out all fires can lead to fires which burn faster and more out of control.
- Recognize that fire is also seen as essentially dangerous and unpredictable.
- Talk about "fire teams" when referring to the management team.
- Use the word "burn" when referring to fires set for management purposes. Similarly, using the term "controlled burn" is more favorably received than "prescribed fire."
- Reassure the public about safety by using words like "safely".
- Use messengers the public perceives as being on the "front lines", specifically, fire fighters, park rangers, state foresters and the U.S. Forest Service. "Local" firefighters have the highest level of trust.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND MITIGATION MESSAGING CAMPAIGNS

Smokey Bear

Not all programs will want to use Smokey Bear. The choice to use Smokey Bear is a local one, influenced by several factors. However, for those that do choose to use Smokey Bear, there a few things the program staff needs to know. Smokey Bear is a powerful symbol for wildfire prevention, as his image is widely recognized and connected with wildfire prevention. Therefore, his image and message must be protected. Smokey's sole message is about personal responsibility in connection with unwanted ignitions. That message: *"Only **you** can prevent* *wildfires,"* has been tested and is linked solidly to the symbol. No other message such as *"Stop, Drop and Roll"* should be used in connection with Smokey Bear.

The United States Department of Agriculture - Forest Service (USDA-FS), the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and the Ad Council are designated as the *guardians* for the use of Smokey Bear. The DOI may use Smokey Bear for fire wildfire prevention through an agreement with the USDA-FS. The use of Smokey Bear is protected by federal law. Guidelines for the appropriate use of Smokey are found in the latest version of the USDA-FS's *Smokey Bear Guidelines*. The most current version of these guidelines is recognized as the most authoritative source on the use of Smokey Bear and are accepted and adopted by the BIA. This document is available online at: https://smokeybear.com/en/about-wildland-fire, near the bottom of the page as Smokey Bear Use Guidelines.

FIREWISE®

Firewise is a national program managed by the NFPA that emphasizes community involvement and provides important information for residents to reduce the risk of a wildland fire igniting their homes. It teaches people how to adapt to living where wildfires frequently occur and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent losses.

Firewise uses a set of principles based on the research of Retired US Forest Service Fire Scientist, Jack Cohen. This research into how structures ignite in a wildland fire provides the basis for most of the advice fire wildfire prevention programs use to reduce structural ignitability. More information on the NFPA's Firewise® program can be found online at: https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire.

Ready, Set, Go!

The *Ready, Set, Go! (RSG)* program, managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), helps fire departments teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas how to best prepare themselves and their properties against fire threats. The messages used by RSG are appropriate for most Tribal communities. RSG has three simple tenets:

1. **Be Ready –** Be Fire Adapted and Ready

Residents are encouraged to take personal responsibility and prepare long before the threat of a wildland fire so their home is ready in case of a fire. It encourages the creation of defensible space by clearing brush away from the home. Fire-resistant landscaping and hardening of the home with fire-safe construction measures are also promoted. The program recommends assembling emergency supplies and belongings in a safe place and planning escape routes. Finally it advises making sure all those residing within the home know the plan of action.

2. **Be Set –** Maintain Situational Awareness

It promotes packing emergency items, staying aware of the latest news and information on fire activity from local media, fire department, and public safety officials.

3. **Go** – Act Early

It promotes executing an evacuation plan early as a wildfire approaches. By evacuating early, better access is provided for firefighters and public safety officials. Their attention can then be focused on the suppression effort and property protection, rather than on rescuing residents that have become trapped by the fire.

Additional information about RSG, is available online at: http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/.

Respect the Flame

Respect the Flame is a program developed by the North Dakota Forest Service and the North Dakota Fire Fighters Association to educate children and their parents about fire safety. It features replacing fear of fire with understanding of, and respect for, fire. Additional information about *Respect the Flame* is available online at: https://respecttheflame.com/.

One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire

The *One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire* campaign has been used successfully by several federal agencies and states. It focuses primarily on vehicle and homeowner equipment-caused fires, but supports the wildfire prevention of all human caused fires. The campaign highlights lesser known but significant causes of wildfires, including sparks created by tow chains dragging along the pavement or by a metal lawnmower blade striking a rock.

Additional information about *One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire*, is available from several sources on the internet. CalFire's website is well developed and offers a toolkit: http://www.readyforwildfire.org/One-Less-Spark-Campaign/.

The USDA Forest Service also offers several print ready publications online at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r4/fire-aviation/wildfire prevention/?cid=fseprd520523.

The Fire History Project: Fire on the Land

The Salish-Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation have developed an educational program appropriate for Indian Country entitled *Fire on the Land*. It includes an integrated set of educational materials that focus on the traditional uses of fire by Indian people and the profound effects that Indian burning had on plant and animal communities. Additional information about *Fire on the Land* is available online at: http://www.csktribes.org/natural-resources/tribal-forestry/fire-history-project.

IV. COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Whether sharing information with public and target audiences, or involving them in various activities, there are many communication techniques to utilize. Certain techniques work better with a particular audience or situation than others. The use of multiple communications techniques allows a single message to reach a broader audience, than any one delivery method alone. Some commonly used communication techniques include:

- Personal Contacts.
- Briefing Papers
- Print Media (news releases, magazine articles, public service announcements or PSAs, paid advertising).
- Printed Materials (posters, brochures, pamphlets, rack cards and fliers).
- Broadcast Mass Media (television and radio interviews, public service announcements or PSAs, paid advertising, documentaries, and talk shows).
- Digital Media (websites, blogs, social media, e-mail).
- Events
  - Exhibits and displays at: fairs, sporting events, festivals, trade shows.
  - Presentations to Groups
  - Public Meetings.
  - Demonstrations.
  - Character Appearances and Parades.
- Signs (billboards, sign boards, fire danger signs, road signs).

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Matching the message(s) to the delivery method may require some analysis. Considerations include:

- Will the target audience(s) be present and receptive?
- Is this form of delivery an effective or efficient means of reaching the target audience(s)?
- Are the messages in a format suited for the delivery method?

Answering these questions will help the prevention program to develop a better strategy, for delivering their prevention messages, to the right audience, at the right time, in the right way.

The NWCG's Wildfire Prevention Strategies Guide, PMS 455, has additional information on selecting the most effective tools for targeting specific fire causes. It can be found online at: https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/products/pms455_wfprevnttrat.pdf.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Personal contacts are at the very heart of any communications effort in wildfire prevention. The personal contact is undoubtedly the most effective and meaningful communications technique. When correctly conducted, a personal contact is a rewarding experience for both the prevention personnel and the person(s) being contacted.

Personal contacts occur in the daily course of conducting the prevention job. They occur while on patrol, at events, at a fire scene, while maintaining fire danger signs, or even while buying lunch or getting gas. Some are initiated by the public, while others are initiated by the prevention personnel.

Most prevention personnel have not been trained in conducting personal contacts. Instead they've relied on personal experience, and trial and error, to develop their personal contact styles. Some of these techniques are useful, while others can be improved on.

Casual Contacts

Personal contacts may be casual and singular, or they may be repetitive. Single, casual contacts occur while on patrol, at events or other activities that bring prevention personnel into contact with the public. These contacts can be vitally important to the success of the prevention program.

Casual Contact Tips.

- Be warm, direct, professional and caring when making public contacts.
- Be informed with the latest weather forecast, fire danger, burning restrictions, and general safety information about any ongoing wildfires or prescribed burns.
- Respond to the contact's questions with simple, straightforward answers.
- Look for opportunities to naturally include prevention message(s) in the conversation.
- If you don't know the answer, be honest. Then direct them to where they might get an answer.
- Remember that to the public, you are the Agency or Tribe. Your demeanor should convey quiet, intelligent confidence.
- Avoid horseplay or loud, boisterous behavior that might intimidate or threaten the public.
- Be aware of the situation and alert to suspicious behavior.

Key Contacts

Repetitive contacts are commonly referred to as "Key Contacts". These are people who can help spread the prevention message through influence with others in the community; or, who through their position, can help with events or other means of getting the prevention message out. Examples include: fire chiefs, police chiefs, emergency managers, country store managers, park managers, principals and teachers, elders, tribal council members and tribal administration officials.

As with casual contacts, there are several guidelines to developing good relationships with Key Contacts.

Key Contact Tips

- Be sensitive to the timing of any visit. These people have busy schedules, it's best to call in advance.
- Have something to say. Ask for assistance with getting a message delivered, a campaign started, or an event.
- Don't waste their time. As said above, Key Contacts have busy schedules, once the business is done, don't overstay the welcome with small talk.
- Avoid gossip and rumor mongering. Most Key Contacts are interested in the latest news. Information is their currency.
- Be prepared for the contact with a written proposal or briefing paper, so that Key Contact will have something to refer to and consider.
- Sincerely thank them for their time.

Briefing Papers

Briefing papers (BP) are a form of printed material designed for use with internal audiences. They are often prepared to give a high level administrative official, or executive, the basic background for a specific subject. They can be informative (just the facts) or persuasive (with a call for action).

The target audience for most BPs have little time to read long documents. The wording in the BP needs to be concise, simple and non-technical. Several styles have been developed for BPs, the one below is frequently used in the BIA.

Briefing Paper Suggested Format

- At the top, declare the intent of the Briefing Paper: **For Information** or **For Decision**.

- Include the **Date** of the BP.
- **Issue/Topic**: A short sentence or bullet describing the subject of the BP.
- **Key Messages**: A short paragraph and supporting bullets that carry the essence of what is being conveyed in the BP. This section needs to be kept very short and simple for ease of understanding. It should describe the central issue or decision to be made.
- **Background**: A very short paragraph that provides just enough background information to describe why the Issue/Topic and Key Messages are important.
- **Current Status**: A series of bullet points that provide additional details about the situation or Issue/Topic. These should be very short snippets of concise information.
- **Way Forward**: In a "For Decision" BP, this is where you would place the recommended actions to address the Issue/Topic.
- **Point of Contact**: This is the name, phone and e-mail address of the program staff for the leadership to contact with questions or for additional information.

Briefing Paper Tips

- Keep the BP to one page.
- Use a 12 point font.
- Use simple language. Avoid technical terms or jargon.
- Don't add information outside of the Issue/Topic.
- Stick with verifiable facts, don't guess or postulate on facts you don't have.
- If the purpose for the BP is to obtain a decision, just provide your recommended course of action unless requested to provide a range of possible actions.
- Have a peer or co-worker proof read the BP, before submitting it.

PRINT MEDIA

One of the most common message delivery techniques is the "news release". There is a certain amount of skill involved in writing a news release that actually gets used. The NWCG's S-203, Introduction to Incident Information provides excellent training in how to write news releases, briefing papers and public service announcements.

The BIA has been provided "Director's Guidance" on writing news releases. This guidance can be found on line at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-018440.pdf. A template for BIA news releases can be obtained from the Regional WUI/Prevention Specialist or the BWFM Wildland Fire Communication & Education Specialist at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC).

News Release Tips

- Keep the release short. Limit it to one page if possible. The editor or reporter may expand on the story if interest, and space allow, by interviewing the author.
- Use the template, if representing the BIA. If the release is being provided by a Tribe, use the Tribally approved format.
- Provide a "Release by" date and the author's name and contact info near the top.
- Try to answer "Who, What, When, Where, and Why" in the first sentence.
- Put the most important information in the first paragraph.
- Use quotes attributed to respected or easily recognized public leaders. For example: "According to Chief XXX, fire danger is at historic levels." ALWAYS obtain their permission first.

- Avoid using jargon or technical language.
- Make sure the release provides some sort of call to action stating what the readers can do.
- Start the release with a location in capital letters, such as: “PINE RIDGE, SD – ”
- End the release, near the bottom of the age with “ #END# ”
- Have someone with public affairs expertise review the release before distributing it.

PRINTED MATERIALS

Printed materials are good ways to provide the target audiences with more detailed information on a subject. They are relatively easy to produce and print. They also provide a way to keep messages consistent. Here are some of the most common printed materials:

Fliers

Fliers are one-page information sheets. These are often used to announce a meeting or special event, but can also be used to convey prevention messages. They can be printed on one or two sides. They can be printed in black and white or color. They can have illustrations or photos.

This format is extremely flexible, but may not be perfect for all situations. Fliers can usually be developed using a word processor such as MS-Word.

Here are a few guidelines for making fliers:

- For the text, use a large font that is easy to read such as Times Roman at 16 or 18 points. Make headlines in even larger font size with eye-catching special effects.
- Design fliers to fit on 8½ x 11 inch pages.
- Consider using line art or illustrations, rather than photos. It makes reproduction less expensive.
- Consider using colored papers. A brightly colored sheet makes the flier stand out.
- Keep fliers to simple messages, use lots of “white space”.

Rack Cards and Door Hangers

Rack cards and door hangers are similar in the amount of information and style in which they convey information. The primary difference is that door hangers have a slotted hole at the top. Rack cards are useful to leave at information kiosks or to insert into promotional bags.

The standard size for these is 4 x 9 inches. They are usually printed on a glossy finish card stock. They usually have to be commercially printed.

Designing rack cards and door hangers can be challenging. Word processors can be used to design rack cards/door hangers; however, a more professional quality draft can be made by a desk-top publishing program like MS Publisher, or Adobe Pagemaker. It may be necessary to work with a graphics artist to develop the rack card/door hanger at the desired quality level.

Rack Card/Door Hanger tips:

- Keep the primary message short, up front, and large.
- Use supporting points sparingly.
- Use graphics to make the card attractive or bold.
- Remember to use both sides.
- Be sure to include a website, phone number and/or e-mail address for those seeking additional information.
- Always use an Agency, Tribal or Coalition identifier to indicate the source of the information.

Brochures and Pamphlets

Brochures and pamphlets provide an opportunity to provide more detailed information on a project, messages or program. They are not the most effective way to deliver simple messages, but can be used to distribute several similar messages.

Some research indicates that brochures and pamphlets are not a highly effective delivery method. Therefore, it is recommended that they only be used when no other form of printed materials will work.

The most common formats for brochures and pamphlets are tri-fold and 4-fold designs. This can be a little confusing as the tri-fold brochure only has two folds and the 4-fold only has three. It might be easier to think of them as tri-panel and 4-panel. The tri-fold design generally is printed on an 8½ x 11 inch page, folded in two places so that it provides 6 columns of print (3 per side). The 4 fold design is usually printed on an 8 ½ x 14 inch page, folded in three places to provide 8 columns or panels.

The design of the brochure may require a little engineering to get the panels to print in the correct order, so that as the brochure unfolds, and the information is presented logically. The best way to do this may be to print each panel and then lay them out to see how they should be ordered. Then build the brochure in whatever software platform is familiar and easy to use. MS-Word can be used to develop basic brochures, using the "columns" feature. MS Publisher may provide a bit more control, and a few more advanced options. Higher end, more complicated brochure design software is available through Adobe or other graphics design companies.

Here are a few tips to designing a good brochure:

- **Set up your margins correctly.** The margins that are between panels should be twice as wide as the outer margins. Since the panels are separated by a fold, each panel needs its own margin.

- **Use a template.** Some software provides templates, use them. One tip is to make the inside flap very slightly smaller than the outer flap. This way it folds and opens neatly.

- **Use some graphics or pictures.** Nothing is less appealing than a brochure that is all text. You want your readers to actually read the information.

- **Use attractive, easily read fonts.** Limit fonts to no more than *two* in the brochure. Vary the sizes to provide impact and separation of sections. Using bold and italic versions of a font do not count as font changes.

- **Think about the order of information.** Both the front outer flap and back (center) panel of a tri-fold brochure are visible without opening the brochure. Then when opened, the inner left flap becomes visible. At the same time the right outside flap is exposed. The inside, and inner flaps (far right inside panel) are the last sections to be seen and may be overlooked. *Don't* put your critical message there!

- **Use the inside 3-panels wisely.** The biggest restraint on a small brochure design is that each panel is very narrow. This can be hard to fit certain types of content. So save that inner area for what really needs the space.

- **The 4-fold brochure may be difficult to design.** Use it sparingly, only when the amount of information you need to share won't fit the tri-fold design.

- **Print and fold your design mockup.** Actually print it out and fold it up. Printing it at full size ensures that the type size is right and the panel breaks are in the right place (don't rely on just viewing it on screen). Folding it will force you to make sure your panels are in the right order and that the flow of information is logical.

- **There are several folding options for the 4-fold design**. Some may be unusual, but very useful for graphics. Use the folding pattern that best fits the information being conveyed.

- **Try something big.** Most small, tri-fold brochures use a column-based layout. Each panel is a column of text. That limits the material into spaces about three inches wide. Using graphics that bleed off the edge or run into another panel can make the brochure stand out. The text can then be printed over the graphics in the three columns.

Posters

Posters are simply temporary signs. They are printed on cardstock, cardboard or plastic. They should be printed on weather resistant poster stock if printed on anything other than plastic. The ink should be specified to resist excessive fading and running when wet. Consult a graphics specialist to get the best specifications for the poster.

Posters are useful for posting seasonal or non-permanent messages, where signs would be cost prohibitive. They relay information in the absence of prevention personnel.

They typically convey three types of messages.

- **General awareness or informational posters** provide reminders or information such as: "Crush Smokes."

- **Regulatory posters** provide information on regulations established by law to prevent wildfires such as: "Spark Arrester Required."

- **Prohibitive posters** provide the most current information on fire restrictions, or acts creating fire risk such as: "No Campfires." In order to adequately post a unit during periods of fire restrictions, it is desirable to have a poster mount at each road entering the unit. Visitors can't be expected to comply with special restrictions unless they are informed.

Posters can convey their messages visually, with graphics, or pictures or be text based. The choice of format largely depends on the information being conveyed.

They can vary in size from small notices to highway posters.

- Use the **largest posters** (54 x 44 inches) only on high-speed highways (55 mph) and in situations where the scale of the scenery dwarfs their effect. Use these posters sparingly and place them far enough apart so that they do not appear to be repetitious.

- Use **large-sized posters** (42 x 34 inches) on roads with speeds of 40-50 mph. Limit the use of these posters to essential locations.

- The **medium-sized poster** (44 x 16 inches) is to be used on most low-speed, rural roads. This size is often the most effective as it most likely targets visitors who have left the highway and are directly en-route to their destination. There are other poster messages available in this size to extend the use of these poster mounts in the off-fire season.

- The **smaller posters**, such as 14 by 12, 12 by 14, 12 by 10, and 10 by 12 inches, are designed for pedestrian traffic, trails, campgrounds, trail heads, bulletin boards, and roadside rest areas. It is possible to create posters with explanatory text of restrictions for these sites because the visitor is walking past the sign and has time to stop and read the notice.

It is likely that most bulletin boards, interpretive sites, and roadside rest area signs are in place for purposes other than fire. Remember to coordinate your messages with the people who maintain these signs. This is an opportunity to share duties with others.

Poster Design Tips

- **Avoid using posters "out of season".** Be sure to remove seasonal-use posters when their purpose is served and replace them with an appropriate message. A poster such as "Fire Restrictions Now in Effect" doesn't serve your organization when fire restrictions are no longer in place.

- **When possible, posters should communicate the desired message in a positive manner.** For example, during periods of extreme fire danger you may allow campfires in designated campgrounds. Use the campground bulletin board to post "Campfires OK- with CAUTION". A second example during campfire restrictions is to utilize the poster "Fire Restrictions Now in Effect-No Campfires, No Charcoal Grills, Gas Stoves OK." People react more favorably when they are told something they want to hear, and in this example, you have provided information, alternatives, and positive reinforcement.

- **Posters should be selected so that their message and graphics reflect the vegetation of the area.** There are trees and forests in the background of many available posters, yet many wildlands don't have trees. It is more appropriate to use a poster such as: "Be Extra Careful with Fire" (Oak and broadleaf graphics) in a deciduous forest environment, than using the same poster in the juniper/sagebrush environment of the Great Basin. Similarly, "A Beautiful Forest Is A Matchless Sight" doesn't belong in a location without a forest!

- **Consider the use of closely spaced sequential messages on separate signs in special high-use areas or along high-speed roads.** Humans seem to remember well things in triplicate. We often prepare presentations using this "pattern of three". Famous speeches commonly use threes: "Friends, Romans, Countrymen…", or "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Examples of safety messages include: "Stop, Drop, and Roll", "Stop, Look, and Listen", or "Axe, Shovel, and Water bucket are required for camping". There are a number of combinations that can be made for more effective messages.

Broadcast Mass Media

The broadcast media offers several opportunities to convey prevention messages. In addition to the traditional television or radio interview, there are opportunities for PSA's and paid advertising.

News media can be a valuable partner in sharing your news with the public. It is important to establish relationships with news media, and be known as a reliable source for information.

Working with local media to share the message with their viewers, readers, and listeners is a great way to generate awareness for the prevention program. It can also educate more homeowners in the community, and surrounding areas, about how to prepare for wildfire.

Advice and technical support in working with the media may be available from Tribal Public Affairs Specialists or Public Information Officers. Most of these specialists work with the news media on a regular basis and have established invaluable contacts. The Agency Office of Public Affairs or Public Information Office should be contacted ahead of time when working with the media, to ensure that efforts are coordinated.

Prevention personnel should be aware that working with the media is often regulated by their Agency or Tribe. The prevention person needs to make certain they are clear about their ability and authority before engaging with reporters. The BIA has been provided "Director's Guidance" for working with the media. It includes a list of topics that prevention personnel may discuss. This guidance can be found on line at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-018440.pdf.

Additional information on working with the print and broadcast media can be found in the NWCG's Guide on Prevention and the Media, PMS 454. This publication is now considered obsolete by the NWCG, and is no longer supported; however, it still contains much valuable information for prevention personnel, when working with the media. It can be accessed online at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-020446.pdf.

General Media Relations Tips

- Consider the media as an ally, not an adversary. Build a strong, positive partnership with the media. Reach out to the media when you have a story to tell, and make yourself available when the media needs information from you.
- Provide equal access, release the same information at the same time to everyone. Being labeled as a source that "plays favorites" can hurt your credibility. The exceptions to this are when a reporter calls on his/her own initiative, and wants to do a story on fire prevention, or when you have a story idea that fits a specific media outlet.
- Remember that reporters are extremely pressed for time. Approach them in an intelligent, concise manner. Be mindful of deadlines.
- Invite media to cover your public events. Also consider posting it in the local newspaper or TV community calendars.
- Encourage reporters to visit sites where they can see fire management/prevention/mitigation techniques that are being or have been applied.
- Know the reporter's publication/program and audience. TV stations are more likely to cover events with large numbers of participants, action, and photo opportunities.
- Always prepare for an interview. Review the tips and appropriate message points prior to interviews.
- If you are uncomfortable with a reporter's questions, or if he/she requests comment on something beyond the scope of your local program, please politely offer to put the reporter in touch with Central Office or Tribal media relations team.
- Follow up to be sure the reporter has everything he/she needs for the story.
- **Stay within the scope of your authority.** Do not address issues of national policy or political context.
- **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS "OFF THE RECORD."** However well intentioned, reporters are not obligated to refrain from publishing any information you share, regardless of the nature of the conversation. Don't share information with a reporter that you would not be comfortable seeing in print/on air.
- Avoid saying NO COMMENT. Let the reporter know that you are not in the position to respond to certain questions without "no comment" being the soundbite 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."

Before an Interview

- Know the reporter, program, interview format, and audience.
- Know the goal for the interview. What is the most important message to be delivered?
- Know what 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 those prepared message points.

Interview Tips

- Speak in "headlines." Offer 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 you want to make.
- Project self-confidence, ***you are the expert***.
- 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 your 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 overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.
- Keep cool. Don't be provoked.
- Never lie to a reporter.

Special Tips For Television Interviews

- Sit erect, but not ramrod-straight, slightly forward in the chair.
- If the interview is standing, stand straight and don't rock back and forth.
- Resist the urge to shout into the microphone. Speak and gesture naturally.
- Talk to the interviewer and look at him/her, not the camera.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your "interview attitude" from the moment the reporter and videographer arrive until they leave.

DIGITAL MEDIA

The BIA does not have its own digital media policy, so it follows the DOI policy for digital media.

The DOI policy on digital media can be found on line at: https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/470_dm_2_digital_media_policy_1.pdf.

The DOI Guide for Digital Media is located on line at: https://www.doi.gov/employees/dmguide.

Digital media used by the BIA consists of websites, social media and e-mail. The two most commonly used for external communications are websites and social media.

Websites

Websites are great for posting permanent information for the public. They can also be used for posting some seasonal or periodic information. They can also link to external sites.

Since websites are managed by webmasters and content managers, the process for getting information posted can be slow. In addition to content review, the material is also subject to being formatted as compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Recommended Website Content

- A basic description of the Agency or Tribal prevention program and the services it provides.
- Links to local fire danger and fire weather forecasts.
- Information on current burning restrictions, including the current status.
- Information on the burn permitting process.
- The burn permit application.
- Tips on Firewise practices around the home.
- Information on Ready-Set-Go!
- Contact information to request educational/school programs.
- Photos.
- Links to social media sites.

Social Media

Today, many people get their news from their smart phones, using social media. Social media posts are usually quick posts about current events. They are very useful for sending information about fire danger, ongoing fire activity, fire restrictions, or for soliciting tips on arson.

The DOI uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr and YouTube. Of these the ones with most applicability to prevention messages are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The DOI does not currently recommend Twitter.

If your program chooses to use social media, it is strongly recommended that the entire staff becomes familiar with the DOI policy on Digital Media and the DOI guidance on Social Media found on-line at: https://www.doi.gov/employees/dmguide/social.

Recommended uses for Social Media include:

- Posting current fire danger.
- Posting fire weather warnings and watches.
- Updates on ongoing fire and prescribed fire activity.
- Updates on fire restrictions, burning bans, and area closures.
- Requests for tips concerning arson activity.
- Posting tips on fire prevention for specific or current risks.
- Posting tips on seasonal home Firewise practices.

EVENTS

Events are some of the most effective ways to deliver messages to large groups of people. There are many types of events. However, they can be grouped into five categories.

- Exhibits
- Presentations to groups
- Meetings
- Demonstrations (field Days, “Show me” trips, and open houses)
- Character Appearances

Regardless of the event type, some basic principles apply to planning for participation in any event.

1. Develop the messages that need to be delivered.
2. Understand the audience, participants and nature of the event.
3. Determine the scope of the BIA or Tribal participation.
4. Know the ground rules of what types of participation are allowed or encouraged.
5. Select the best delivery method for the event and messages.
6. Develop a plan with a budget estimate (an event planning tool is in the appendix).
7. Obtain enough funding, staff support, materials and supplies to execute the plan.
8. Have a contingency plan for any foreseeable difficulties.
9. Execute the plan.
10. Conduct an after action review or post event evaluation.

Additional information on managing events can be found in the NWCG's Wildfire Prevention Event Management Guide, PMS 452. This publication is now considered obsolete by the NWCG and is no longer supported; however, it still contains much valuable information for prevention personnel when managing an event. It can be accessed online at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-020440.pdf.

Staffing

Staffing the event is one of the most important steps. The selection of the right personnel and having enough personnel can be a challenge. The cost of staffing an event is often the largest single cost incurred, particularly if travel expenses are incurred in bringing the necessary personnel to the site, in addition to the salaries of those involved in installing, dismantling or servicing an exhibit.

Prior to the event, a preliminary briefing should be provided for the entire event staff. The key messages and supporting points should be included. The staff should be familiar with the process being used and their roles. Event staff should be reminded of the need to be friendly and courteous to all attendees, before, during and after the event. If there is a dress code for the event, this needs to be relayed and enforced.

Exhibits and Displays

Exhibits and displays are a visual communications technique designed to encourage one-on-one discussions between the organization's personnel, and the public. They also provide opportunities for materials distribution at public events, fairs, seminars, workshops, special events, etc.

The two terms, displays and exhibits, are often used interchangeably; however, they do have slightly different meaning. A display is usually a smaller part of an exhibit. The exhibit usually refers to the entire booth space. They can be useful at many public events such as fairs, outdoors shows, seminars, workshops, and festivals. Creating high quality exhibits can be expensive and time consuming. Where in-house exhibit capabilities and experience are lacking, consultation with others who have developed exhibits or professional exhibit design companies may be justified.

Exhibits can be complex or simple. They can be costly or inexpensive. They are typically staffed, but can be unstaffed. The more complex the exhibit and the more people involved, the greater the need for an action plan. Caution must be used with home-made exhibits. Remember the exhibit reflects the professionalism of the organization. Simply using Velcro to attach a few photos onto a felt covered sheet of plywood, will not instill much confidence in your organization's capability.

After developing the key messages, perhaps the most critical step is developing the visual theme of the exhibit. When walking by an exhibit, a person decides in a matter of seconds whether to view the exhibit or pass by. Flashing lights, loud music or bright colors, may catch the visitor's attention, but have little to do with your message. Most exhibits are viewed for about 30 seconds, then the viewer moves on. They may stay for a few minutes if they have a question. The theme and messaging are what keep a visitor at the exhibit.

Visual themes such as color schemes, echoed in the graphic and structural elements of the exhibit, can quickly identify the organization. Shapes and graphic styles should complement the color scheme to make a consistent theme. Museum displays often make good use of themes, and may be a good source of inspiration for exhibit designers.

Design

Once the theme is determined, other criteria, such as the nature of the audience, key messages, the size of the event, and budgets all impact the design of the exhibit. The following should be considered when designing an exhibit.

Do you have the expertise and capability to design and build the exhibit?

Is there any way to make the exhibit more interactive?

Is there a need to use this exhibit more than once?

How difficult will it be to build and set up?

Are there needs for additional power outlets, all weather considerations or storage?

Types of Exhibits

Exhibits can be ordered or built in a variety of ways. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

Table Throws: Table Throws or table cloths with printed emblems, messages, or graphics can be an inexpensive option for a portable exhibit. They are flexible, reusable and inexpensive. The disadvantage is they don't provide much room for the expansion of a key message or to display graphical material. Also, when used alone, they may give the appearance of poor planning at an event where the exhibit spaces are larger than 10 ft. by 10 ft.

Small Exhibits: Small exhibits are typically of a table top design or a free standing exhibit of eight to ten feet in length. They are best used in spaces of 200 to 400 square feet. The commercial free-style exhibits offer opportunities to vary the key messages and graphics for a variety of situations. They can be ordered with organization logos pre-printed. They are usually light weight and can be assembled by one or two people. They are moderately priced and may be the best choice for a small organization. Messaging and graphics space, and flexibility can be limited, depending on the style.

Medium/Large Exhibits: Exhibits in areas larger than 400 square feet offer the exhibit designer more space to create a striking visual impression. However, the larger area creates challenges for the designer to maintain the theme and key messages. The additional space provides an opportunity for multiple displays, demonstration areas, character appearances, audiovisual presentations and interactive games. However, the enlarged space can present to a disorganized, chaotic appearance unless the theme is consistent. These larger exhibits are more costly, and can represent a significant investment for the organization. Care must be taken to keep the design flexible, so that a variety of messages and uses can be accommodated. The higher cost of these exhibits normally results in their continued reuse, sometimes even after they have become worn. Considerations for choosing one of these exhibits are: ease of transportation, personnel required for assembly, and actual need.

Modular Exhibits: These are made up of several display components that may be used together or separately. Modules may be freestanding, or connect in more than one configuration. Perhaps, more attractive to the cost-conscious exhibit designer, is that modular units can be customized to a particular audience through the use of interchangeable graphic panels, headers and signs. These exhibits allow the maximum in flexibility. They can be arranged to accommodate table tops through large exhibit spaces. Headers can be changed to provide additional messaging flexibility. These exhibit packages tend to be the most expensive, difficult to store and can be difficult to assemble the entire system.

Commercial Exhibits: If there is enough lead time and available funding, commercial exhibits may offer the best service. Exhibits can be leased or purchased. There are numerous commercial exhibits vendors. Their exhibits range from very simple tabletop types, to large convention exhibit designs. Be aware this service requires long lead times, so proper planning is essential.

Graphics and Text

The old adage: “a picture is worth a thousand words” is true, IF it is the right picture. Graphics can be photographs, artistic renderings, videos, or charts and graphs. They can be “hard copy” or electronic media. A display with only text or generic photos will not be as effective as one with just the right combination of text and graphics.

The following are some things to consider when developing the exhibit graphics:

Photography: Photographs need to be contemporary, good quality, high resolution, and large enough to be seen from the distance at which visitors will pass by. Nearly all photography has moved to a digital format. This format offers great flexibility and utility. The primary concern is resolution. In most exhibits, photos will need to be enlarged to a minimum of 18 by 24 inches. As the size increases, the resolution becomes very important. Use the highest resolution camera the budget will allow to create the photos.

Photographs should clearly illustrate the message or point. If they need a lengthy explanation, look for a different photo.

Decide if text will be embedded in the image or displayed separately, there are advantages to both.

Photos should be mounted, to make them stand out. Many types of mounting options exist. If the photo is large, consider having it professionally mounted.

Artwork: Artwork, if used, should be tasteful and of good quality. Like photography, it can be a powerful tool. Most of the same rules of thumb apply to artwork, as to photographs.

Electronic presentations: Electronic audiovisual presentations are increasingly easy to produce as technology changes. So called “smart” devices, allow for tremendous flexibility and creativity. A dynamic and carefully planned audiovisual presentation can deliver an enormous amount of information and be entertaining.

Charts and graphs: Charts and graphs can convey a lot of information in a thought provoking way. They need to be well designed, so that the casual viewer can capture the most important information in a matter of seconds. Text should be limited. The title of the chart or graph should convey its subject. Care should be taken to select the best graph style to display the information, avoiding extremely busy, complicated charts and graphs.

Text - Text is important to any exhibit or display. It can be embedded in the graphics, or set on its own mount. Think of text in terms of sound “bytes”. Try to limit each text “byte” to six words or less. Font choices are extensive; however there are just three groups of fonts. These are:

- Serif: letters have "feet". Examples are Times Roman, Cambria and Garamond.
- San serif: letters do not have "feet". Examples are Arial. Calibri, and Verdana.
- Decorative: These fonts are stylized and sometimes difficult to read. Some are styled after a handwriting style. While some are useful in displays, they should be used sparingly. Examples are: Comic Sans, Jokerman, and ALGERIAN.

Try to use only one or, at the most, two fonts across the exhibit.

Text size is also important. Visitors passing by, only have a few seconds to absorb the images and text they see, to decide if they are interested in additional information. Text should increase in size at a rate of one inch for every three to four feet away from the viewer. So a viewer passing by at nine feet might respond better to text that is three inches tall as opposed to one inch.

Setup

Use a checklist when preparing to depart for the event set up the exhibit. The checklist should include all of the parts of the exhibit. It should include tools, dollies, graphics, exhibit materials, tables, chairs and anything else needed at the event. A sample checklist is provided in Appendix C to assist with event planning.

Promotional Items

Promotional/educational items fall into two basic categories. One is those which may have a fair, but possibly very nominal intrinsic value, known to the carnival trade as "trinkets and trash." A second category would consist of promotional/educational items of substantial value, some of which might fall into the lower priced "premiums" or remembrance advertising fields. Typically, items in the second category or "premiums" are not commonly used when delivering wildfire messages due to the cost involved in distributing them in mass quantities.

Promotional/educational materials can be a vital component of any fire prevention exhibit or event. When properly used, they serve as an opener for conversations with the intended audience. However, they can also become distraction if used to the excess. These materials have significant logistical, security and cost considerations. The numbers need to be carefully estimated to avoid excessive spending. Selecting the appropriate number and types of materials is an important action that should occur in the initial planning stage. A good variety of inexpensive materials are available through the National Symbols Website at:

https://www.symbols.gov/ .

Additional educational materials are available through the National Association of State Foresters at:

http://www.stateforesters.org/

Many private vendors also offer promotional items. The private sources selected need to be licensed to sell items protected by law (Smokey Bear, Woodsy Owl) or trademark. If time and budget allow, and special needs exist, developing materials with custom messages is a good option. These custom materials are most useful when they closely support the key messages in the exhibit. When developing custom materials, regulations may exist regarding the individual value, and production of educational materials used in a promotion. Administration or purchasing authorities should be consulted before developing any custom materials.

Handouts

Handouts are also vital to conveying the message. These come in many formats. They can be organization specific, custom to the exhibit, or stock handouts. The most common formats are newsletters, fliers, rack cards, posters, brochures and pamphlets. As with the Promotional Items, the appropriate number and types of handouts need to be selected in the initial planning stage. The handouts should support the key message for the exhibit,

Some organizations refuse to distribute any literature at a show, completely reserving it for distribution by mail at a later date.

Disassembly

Once the event is over, it is time to disassemble, transport and store the exhibit. As the event winds down, many participants begin to close their exhibits early. These early departures produce an implied urgency to tear down the exhibit and vacate the venue. Often the last shift is understaffed and the remaining personnel are eager to go home. This leaves the shift manager with the job of disassembling the exhibit and transporting it back to the storage location. This is when those costly mistakes happen, and an expensive item is overlooked, or damaged in the rush.

To avoid this natural response to the end of the event, the last shift personnel should understand their role is to carefully, and completely pack up and transport the exhibit back to the storage location. Inventories, checklists and cheat sheets are useful in making certain the exhibit pieces all arrive safely at the storage location. It's a good idea to use the Set-up Checklist, to close out with.

After Action

Once the exhibit is safely stored and personnel have had a chance to get some much needed rest, conduct a quick “after action review”, with as many of the event staff, as possible to assemble. Many forms of these reviews exist and nearly all will achieve the same results. You need answers to the following questions:

What did we plan to do?
What did we do?
How did we do (numbers, key contacts, etc.)?
What worked well?
What needs improvement?

Exhibit Planning Organizer

The following tips may help you work your way through the planning and execution of your first exhibit.

- Identify the special event
- Identify space available and any restrictions.
- Identify the target audience(s)
- Define the exhibit message to be delivered.
- Develop the exhibit concept.
- Develop a schedule or plan for the event
- Identify staffing needs.
- Estimate supplies and materials needed,
- Develop budget and cost estimates, obtain approvals as needed.
- Order any additional supplies well in advance.
- If using an existing exhibit or display, verify its condition and make any repairs well in advance.
- If building a new exhibit or display, allow time for design and construction.
- Assemble the exhibit in a mock-up to insure all of the parts fit and nothing is missing.
- Prepare a staffing schedule and brief the staff on the exhibit concept and messages.
- Arrange for transportation and assembly.
- Execute the exhibit

- Dismantle and store the exhibit.
- Obtain feedback from the staff.
- Provide "thank you" messages to staff.

An exhibit planning toolkit can be found in Appendix C. It has several checklists that can help when planning for a large exhibit or event.

Additional information on exhibits and displays can be found in the NWCG's Fire Education Exhibits and Displays, PMS 459. This publication is now considered obsolete by the NWCG, and is no longer supported; however, it still contains much valuable information for prevention personnel, when planning exhibits and displays. It can be accessed online at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-020441.pdf.

Presentations to Groups

Group presentations are an important and effective tool for communicating key messages. Many different types of groups exist. They can range in age from pre-school or "Head Start" programs to seniors groups in retirement villages. Interests are also widely varied. In addition to educational opportunities for school programs, opportunities exist for group presentations to adults. Adult groups may form over shared interest in the environment, social causes, outdoors activities, civic causes, charity or public events.

Whatever the age group or specific interests of the group, knowing some common guidelines can help any speaker prepare for their first presentation.

- Have something to say. Work from the key messages, selecting those that best fit the situation.
- Know the audience. This is vital to the successful delivery of the key messages.
- Select messages and a delivery the audience will relate to. Be approachable.
- Work from an outline. Never read your presentation, Know the subject and messages well enough to deliver the presentation without a script. A good outline format is:
  - Introduce the subject.
  - Tell them what you are going to tell them.
  - Deliver the messages, in a story telling form, if possible.
  - End by telling them what you told them.
- Use visual aids as needed. They can help tell the story and deliver the messages; however, don't let the visual aids become the entire presentation.

- “Practice makes perfect”. To get more practice, join a speakers club or civic group where the members make presentations.
- The NWCG course M-410 Facilitative Instructor provides excellent training and experience in making presentations.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a powerful and entertaining method for conveying prevention messages. It is also culturally appropriate and accepted in Indian Country. Story telling is useful for children and adult education. The story of Smokey Bear is a commonly used fire prevention story. Others include Beaver Steals Fire, the many Coyote Stories, and the Origin stories.

Storytelling can be done with or without visual aids. Often it is the strength of delivery that the storyteller has developed that makes the story entertaining. Hand gestures, changes in voice, facial expressions, and even music can all enhance the quality of the story.

With a little creativity prevention messages can readily be adapted to storytelling formats. There are several tribal organizations and colleges that offer training and assistance with storytelling.

Understanding Age Groups

It is easier to plan presentations when you understand a few basic learning characteristics for different age groups.

Pre School – (ages 3-5)

- Children are just becoming aware of what goes on around them. They are curious about things. The attention span at this age is very short. Dramatic play and talk are ways of testing what they have seen and heard. Discussing their ideas with adults is one of the most effective ways in which preschoolers clarify their concepts. Firsthand experience is helpful and should be included when talking to preschoolers.
- Keep presentations around 5-7 minutes. Give simple information. Complicated concepts will not be understood and should never be used. Keep it tactile, let them touch and see. Present information a little at a time. Too much information at once is usually overwhelming and is not absorbed by a preschool child.
- Sit on the floor with them or be at the same eye level. During the presentation, pass around items being talked about. Use visual aids wherever possible (use large, simple images). Move slowly; do not use rapid movements. Speak slowly in a quiet and calm voice. Limit group size to between five and 20 students -- the fewer the better. Verify the number of students beforehand in order to better plan the program. Relate the information

in the message to something within the children's experience (barbeque, fireplace, gas or wood stove, birthday candles, etc.)

- Characters work well with this age group.
- Allow time for some questions. Answer all questions to the children's satisfaction.

Kindergarten through Second Grade (Ages 5 to 7)

- Children at this age are alert, keen observers with vivid imaginations. They learn best by participating, and being involved in physical activities. Attention spans vary, but a general rule is to keep presentations between 10 and 15 minutes. Indoor programs should never go beyond one school period for any primary class. Limit the number of ideas presented to one or two simple concepts or ideas. Classes should be no larger than 30 students.
- The language used must be appropriate to the age level being taught. A 7-year-old second grader can grasp the meaning of some words that are foreign to the 5-year-old, kindergarten student. These are impressionable children who may hold on to every word and action, so be careful what is said or done.
- Identify with the group. Get down to their level by sitting on the floor or a small chair. Meet them eye to eye. Look them in the eyes as you glance around the group. Use slow, deliberate movements. Speak clearly and distinctly. Repeat often, emphasizing and explaining important words.
- Characters work well with this age group.
- Allow time for some questions. Answer all questions to the children's satisfaction.

Third through Sixth Grade (ages 7 to 11)

Children in this range display perhaps the greatest range in mental and physical growth than any other age group. The younger students are just beginning to deal with more complex issues and problems. Their vocabulary and problem solving skills are undergoing rapid expansion. The older students are ready for more challenging questions and can be eager to tackle them. They are beginning to use graphs and more complicated math skills. At this age they begin to understand cause and effect, basic geography, science and ecology.

Presentations can be progressively more complex and run longer as the grade level increases. Keep presentations under 30 minutes with this group. Interactive problem solving presentations will be well received. These students are ready to be challenged intellectually. Emphasize cause and effect, science, sociology and geography in your presentations. Use visual aids and demonstrations as much as possible.

Seventh through Ninth Grades (Ages 12 to 15)

This can be a challenging age group to work with. This age group is not only impressionable and creative but also inconsistent. They tend to resist authority and question traditional values. They are inclined to react spontaneously and somewhat unpredictably to changes in classroom situations. Peer pressure and self-esteem are significant motivators. These students are interested in the things that affect them, personally. Messages about responsibility, accountability and costs are not highly effective.

The best teaching approach for junior high school students is to orient the presentation to the subject matter they are studying in that particular class. Show how wildland resource losses from fires affect them. Presentations can run 30 to 40 minutes, depending on the maturity of the class. Make the presentation relate to their world and teenage interests. Presentations discussing social issues, geography and science will work well when adapted to mesh with subjects the students are studying. Consider ways to make the presentation as interactive as possible. Visual aids can help with this group if they are current and add to the content of the presentation.

High School (Ages 16 to 18)

Opportunities to reach students in this age bracket are rare. When they are offered, they should always be provided. Most students are fairly serious and generally well-informed about the world around them. Alert high school students quickly detect errors, so instructors must be careful that they present the correct information. If the students are truly interested in the subject, they will be ready to dig much deeper into the background and ask “why”?

Presentations can run up to the entire period, depending on the maturity of the class. Presentations discussing social issues, geography and science will work well when adapted to mesh with subjects the students are studying. Presentations need to relate in some way to the material they are studying. Presentations should be as interactive as possible, although a lecture format is possible with this age group. Professional quality visual aids will help with this group, if they are current and add to the content of the presentation.

Adult Groups (Ages 18 and up)

Adults are different in many ways from students. They are normally present voluntarily. They have experiences to relate to the subject. They tend not to accept the message until the credibility of the speaker is established. They will evaluate the presentation against their own experience.

Be prepared, be passionate and be approachable. Know the group. There may be a group member that is an internally recognized expert on the subject; identify them if possible. Use high quality visual aids, but don't read the slides. Expertise and credibility need to be established early in the presentation. Use an outline to keep focused. Try to limit key messages to no more than five.

Meetings

Meetings provide an excellent opportunity to communicate the organization's key messages to a targeted audience. They allow for two-way communications. In this format, the organization has the opportunity to present its messages, receive feedback, capture new information and identify opinion leaders. The audience has the opportunity to ask questions, voice support or concern, and contribute their expertise and experiences. Evidence also exists suggesting that the methods of involving the public in the decision making process through participatory style meetings, where input is perceived as heard and acted on, increases trust and support of management policies. When carefully planned and executed, these meetings can begin to develop public ownership of the key messages.

Using a trained facilitator or someone trained in consensus building techniques is strongly recommended, when conducting meetings designed to gather input. A good facilitator can take a highly contentious session and turn it into a productive exercise.

Some types of meetings to consider are:

Open Forum

1. Activity

Open forums create opportunities for individuals to share and discuss an issue or concern with the appropriate agency individuals.

2. Considerations

- Time limits should be identified to allow those who wish to speak an opportunity to do so.
- Estimate amount of interest before determining facility.
- Decide how comments will be received: written, orally, or a combination.
- Determine the expectations from the participants making comments.
- Identify equipment needed.

Brainstorming Sessions

1. Activity

Brainstorming is a positive experience and allows participants to gather thoughts and share comments. The brainstorming exercise may start out with a wide variety of ideas, the objective being to "lump and split", as needed, to produce usable results.

It is very important that all comments be accepted without making value judgments.

2. Considerations

- Identify the topic to be brainstormed prior to the session.
- Provide flipcharts to display the comments.
- Provide an individual to document comments.
- Provide a facilitator.

After a list of items has been developed:

- Group similar items together in individual categories.
- Assign titles for each category.
- Divide the participants into groups.

- Assign one or more categories to each group to analyze the problem and develop possible solutions.

Working Group

1. Activity

A working group is a small group of people who interact with agency personnel for the duration of a plan or project which has a clearly defined purpose. Working group members are the communication link to their parent organizations, agencies, or groups and often scheduled for the initial meeting by the agency/fire department. Subsequent meetings can be arranged by the group.

2. Considerations

- The working group format provides timely feedback on phases of the process.
- It reduces lengthy public response time.
- It ensures that agency personnel are aware of the public's level of understanding.
- It may require a substantial commitment of time and energy.
- The group must understand its relationship to the decision-making process.
- Decide the most appropriate size group.
- Members should represent a variety of different groups.
- Determine the frequency and duration of the working group meetings.
- Describe what the group will be asked to prepare and show how it will be used.

Workshop

1. Activity

A workshop will elicit specific information from participants while providing an opportunity for individuals, with a variety of interests, to discuss their values with one another, and increases the knowledge of the participants about a topic or topics. This is a direct involvement process and promotes communication.

Participants complete a task within the workshop time frame. Public commitment to the outcome can be successful if the results are obtained through a mutual collaborative process.

2. **Considerations**

- Select a facility that will promote group interaction, and will accommodate the number of people anticipated.
- Determine whether groups, organizations, and agencies will provide workshop participants, and how other attendees will be selected.
- Gather all the material and data required for the participants.
- Determine what facilitator skills are needed and identify the appropriate personnel.
- Determine how the groups will be formed.
- There must be a clearly stated objective on what the workshop will produce, and how the product will be used.

Seminar

1. **Activity**

Seminars can provide a forum for different interest groups to learn about each other's goals, attitudes, concerns, and diverse viewpoints, as well as providing valuable agency insight.

Through community-led seminars, agency credibility may be enhanced, and issues identified through viewpoints given during presentations. While presentations must be short and may contain generalities, this supplemental information helps the general audience separate facts from concepts.

2. **Considerations**

- Provide a discussion leader or facilitator.
- Agree on a topic and objectives.
- Inform the various publics of the proposed seminar.
- Ensure there is adequate advance notice.
- Provide an appropriate location.
- Request that speakers provide an outline of their topic.
- Request copies of the presentations so they can be provided to all participants.

- Following each presentation, allow a question and answer period.
- Identify how the information obtained from the seminars will be used.
- Provide opportunities for the audience to connect and converse with one another less formally.

Group Meetings and Discussions

1. Activity

Group meetings and discussions provide participants with information, and allows them an opportunity to discuss and take action on a project or product. It involves individuals from similar or different groups in discussing mutual concerns and interests.

This activity allows agencies to present information and inform groups on specific subject matter, and provides a way for everyone to contribute, no matter how large the group. However, the group may need help identifying a problem, and not be ready for technical solutions.

2. Considerations

- Offer to come to a group meeting to make a presentation of interest to the group.
- Provide an overview of the situation and possible courses of appropriate action.
- Keep the presentation brief, focused, and avoid the use of jargon and technical terms.
- Allow time for input and questions from the group.
- Target the appropriate knowledge level of each group.
- Provide appropriate information, including visuals and handouts.

Task Force

1. Activity

The purpose of a task force is to allow a small group of interested people to work on one aspect of a situation and removes the agency from the leadership role. It can be used for group resolution of a common problem (example: improving street signing in a wildland/urban interface area).

2. **Considerations**

- A task force usually consists of about six to ten people. Less than six people may not be productive enough and more than ten people may be too complex.
- The task must be clearly defined and understood by all.
- All background material and information needs to be available to the task force participants.

<u>Demonstrations</u>

Field or Show-Me Trips

1. **Activity**

Field trips provide on-site examination of activities, proposed projects, etc. This activity gets people to the site to discuss items of interest. It creates a more neutral environment for discussion and raises the level of knowledge. These trips can be guided or self-guided; there are advantages to both.

2. **Considerations**

   1. **Guided**

      - A trip conducted by a knowledgeable representative can be an excellent way to share information and exchange ideas. Enough time must be allowed to share adequate information.
      - Identify the purpose of the trip, and plan accordingly based on the anticipated number of people attending.
      - Identify the most effective transportation method(s).
      - Select a starting point, time, and agenda.
      - Prepare handouts as needed.
      - Identify the required agency personnel.
      - Plan a "dry run" trip to identify any scheduling or route problems and consider a contingency plan.
      - Physical condition of people will vary. The trip should be planned based on the capabilities of the participants. The information given should not be too technical or too detailed. Adequate time must be given for people to ask questions and respond to what they see.

2. **Self-guided**

- A self-guided trip allows people to move at their own pace and at their own convenience.
- The information given is limited to a brochure, signs, or posters.
- There is no opportunity for exchange of ideas or discussion when desired.
- Maps and directional signs must be very clear. Information at each stop must be clearly and concisely written. Use graphics to help the participants understand the messages you are trying to convey.
- Inspect the location on a regular basis to make sure signs are in good condition and the route is maintained.

Open House

1. **Activity**

   An open house provides an informal atmosphere where one-on-one conversations can occur, and participants can choose how long they attend.

2. **Considerations**

- Open houses work in situations where a large turnout is not expected. They are most effective when a process is being described or data is being presented.
- Choose a time frame that will provide most members of the public a chance to attend.
- Adequate participant notification should be given.
- Inspect the facility and determine how to arrange the room, what equipment or supplies are needed.
- Select the appropriate personnel to participate.
- Select the appropriate staff specialists based on subject matter.
- Use signs to direct people to the facility.
- Select a facility that is well known, commonly used, or easy to locate. This is particularly important in a small community.
- Set up displays and arrange the room appropriately.

- Avoid discussing controversial matters.

Field Demonstrations

1. **Activity**

   A field demonstration presents a specific activity, such as mechanical fuel reduction, Firewise landscaping, prescribed burning, etc., and provides an opportunity for learning about the activity in detail. It increases knowledge and exposes the audience to various aspects of fire management.

2. **Considerations**

   - Ensure the safety of participants at the demonstration.
   - Select an appropriate method to notify the public.
   - Select a location with good access, including sufficient parking and turnarounds.
   - Provide clear directions to the site(s).
   - Determine if written or display information is necessary.
   - Rehearse the demonstration to determine the amount of time required, and to identify any issues or concerns that may occur.
   - Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when necessary.

Character Appearances

Character appearances can be great for drawing attention to your message. While the most common target audience for characters is children, adults often quickly connect the character with the message. Costumed characters can be used in parades, sporting events, fairs and festivals, school programs or similar events. ***Always consult the guidelines provided for the character, for the appropriate uses of the character.***

One of the most recognizable characters is Smokey Bear. Smokey Bear is a cherished national symbol for wildfire prevention. The use of Smokey Bear is managed by the Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) program of the USDA Forest Service. The CFFP Committee consists of three State Foresters (representing the National Association of State Foresters), The Advertising Council, and the USDA Forest Service. The USDA Forest Service has developed its "Smokey Bear Guidelines, July 2018" that provide the details for using Smokey Bear. The "Guidelines" can be found on the Internet at:

https://www.smokeybear.com/guidelines/SmokeyBearUseGuidelines.pdf.

These guidelines contain the following instructions that are appropriate for use with any costumed character. These instructions have been borrowed from the Smokey Bear guidance and generalized. For the specific Smokey Bear Guidelines, refer to the USDA Forest Service publication referenced above.

1. Use the costume only to further message it was intended to support.
2. Do NOT speak during costumed appearances. The accompanying organization representative should provide the conversation and explanation.
3. Exhibit appropriate animation to be effective. Express sincerity and interest while appearing in the costume by moving arms, head, and legs.
4. Appear dignified and friendly. Avoid clowning, horseplay, inappropriate dancing and gestures, etc.
5. Do not act aggressively and always let the public approach first, especially small children. Let the visitor initiate a hug, paw-shake, or other greeting.
6. Never be photographed in less than full costume. This includes being photographed without the head. Do not allow any photographs when getting into and out of the costume.
7. Never appear in less than full costume. Remain anonymous at every appearance and in any publicity connected with an appearance.
8. Use only costumes that are clean, complete, and in good condition.
9. Keep costume out-of-sight before and after use.
10. Always be accompanied by an appropriate escort in public appearances, except where not practical, such as on a parade float where space is limited.
11. Do not use alcohol or illicit drugs prior to and during the appearance. This condition applies to escorts as well.

SIGNAGE

This section provides an orientation to wildfire prevention signs, located primarily along roadways, and some basic principles for planning, acquiring, installing, and maintaining fire prevention signs. These principles and guidelines will help fire prevention personnel create a consistent, effective, and cost-efficient signing program, that meets their prevention plan objectives.

Throughout this section “signs” will generally refer to permanently installed notices constructed of wood, metal, or fiberglass. “Posters” refer to temporary notices which are usually constructed of cardstock, cardboard, or plastic.

Wildfire prevention signs located next to roads, should be designed to be read from passing vehicles. These signs are not meant to serve as bulletin boards, or interpretive sites. Under normal driving conditions there is little time between being close enough to read the sign and passing the sign. They are a means to communicate short messages you believe are important for visitors to your administrative unit. There are three types of wildfire prevention messages used with signs:

- **Informational:** advises the visitor of ways to prevent fire and the consequences of carelessness.
- **Regulatory**: keeps visitors informed about what they must do to prevent fires.
- **Prohibitive:** states emphatically that certain acts which create fire risks are prohibited.

Reading a sign is the most common one-on-one interaction that occurs between fire management and visitors. In many ways, signs, especially in recreation areas, are the face of the Agency or Tribe. Signing serves to orient, direct, educate, and answer questions, and can enhance or diminish the quality of a visitor’s experience. Signing affords the agency an opportunity to engage and communicate with the public in a very cost-effective manner.

Appropriate sign planning includes information delivery requirements, such as what information needs to be delivered to whom, in what format (language, visual, or both), and where, before decisions about sign type, design, materials, quantity, quality, and placement are made. Legally, signs must also comply with the applicable accessibility guidelines. Remember that a sign is a fabricated, necessary element placed into a natural environment. For this reason, base all sign planning decisions on good site planning, and regard for the area’s setting and character.

Guidelines and Information

The BIA does not have its sign manual posted on-line; however it does have highway engineers at the regional offices. Likewise, many tribes have their own highway engineers. These personnel should be consulted for restrictions, requirements, specifications and permitting processes, prior to erecting signs along Indian highways and roads.

For additional guidelines and specific information on installation, spacing, placement, size, and technical requirements, used by other federal agencies, refer to the links below:

- Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service:

  https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3810021.pdf.

- Missoula Technology Development Center Sign Installation Guide:

  https://www.fs.fed.us/database/acad/om/sign_installation/SignInstallationGuide.pdf.

- Bureau of Reclamation Sign Guidelines:

  https://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/signguide2006.pdf.

The NWCG's Wildfire Prevention Sign and Poster Guide, PMS 469 provides a good reference guide for prevention signage. This publication is now considered obsolete by the NWCG and is no longer supported; however, it still contains much valuable information. It can be accessed online at: https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-020437.pdf.

Fire management signs and posters communicate specific educational, behavioral, emotional, and managerial objectives and messages to visitors. These signs and posters vary in content and design, since they must relate to the resource and management objectives, and goals of the site.

Use resource inventory, and audience research to help determine the key messages and how to communicate them effectively. Employ these fundamental principles with signage, to reach the intended audience:

- Provoke the attention or curiosity of the visitor.
- Relate the message to the everyday life of the visitor.
- Present information and interpretation thematically.
- Define what the visitor needs to know, understand, think about, and remember after leaving the area.

- Answer questions visitors may have about the site, area, or management practices.
- Encourage resource understanding, respect, awareness, and ethical behavior.
- Write directly to a wide range of visitors in terms they readily can understand. Avoid scientific facts, bureaucratic jargon, and acronyms.

Layout and Graphics

- Use a single graphic to replace many words, focus the attention of the viewer, and lead eyes through a sequence. Graphics add beauty and interest to the sign face.
- Make the sign the right size. Avoid perfectly square panels; rectangular shapes are more appealing and cost effective.
- Use new materials and technology to create a variety of sign shapes. While varied shapes may cost more, they can enhance the appeal of the signs and the delivery of the message.
- When custom posters are created, have them designed by graphics professionals.
- State the desired behavior. In certain cases, state how the desired behavior has improved the site. For example, “Using only approved fire rings has reduced accidental fires by XX% in the last XX months.”
- When using symbols on posters, use only approved international symbols.

Bulletin Boards and Message Boards

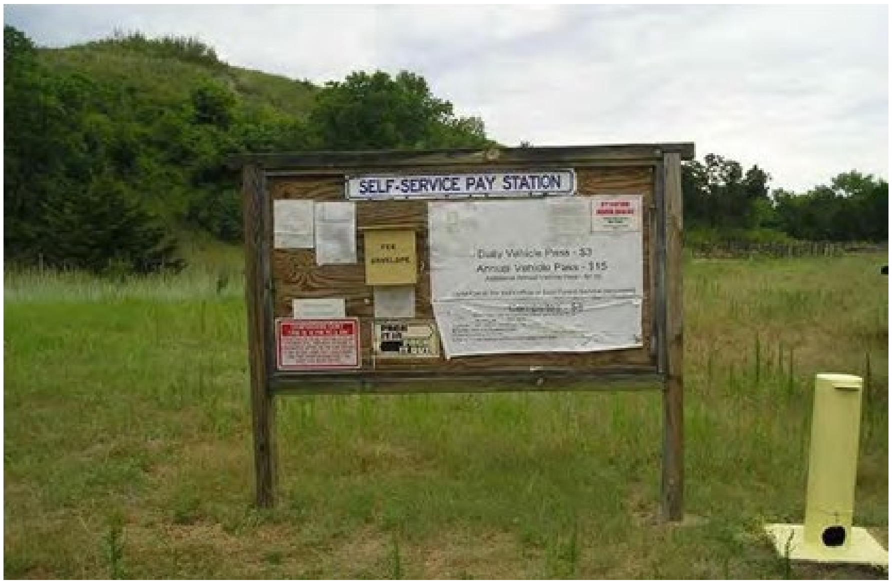
Bulletin boards and message boards provide a good way to convey a variety of messages to the public. They are most appropriate at locations such as visitor centers, rest stops, scenic overlooks, campgrounds and trail heads.

Bulletin boards and message boards must be maintained, and kept current. Unmanaged, unmaintained bulletin boards become an eyesore, and in extreme cases become targets for vandalism and public complaints.

The photo below shows the incorrect way to display signage.

- The site identification information is illegible and lacks agency identification.
- Poor maintenance can send the wrong message. The motorized and wheeled vehicle symbols across the top had red slashes through them. These have mostly worn off, so the sign indicates that these vehicles are allowed at this site.
- The posters and brochures are arranged in a cluttered manner.
- Brochures do not belong on bulletin boards; put them in a dispenser designed to go with the bulletin board.
- Laminate maps before posting.
- Think about what information is important and where it should be posted.
- Do not post duplicate, and/or conflicting messages.

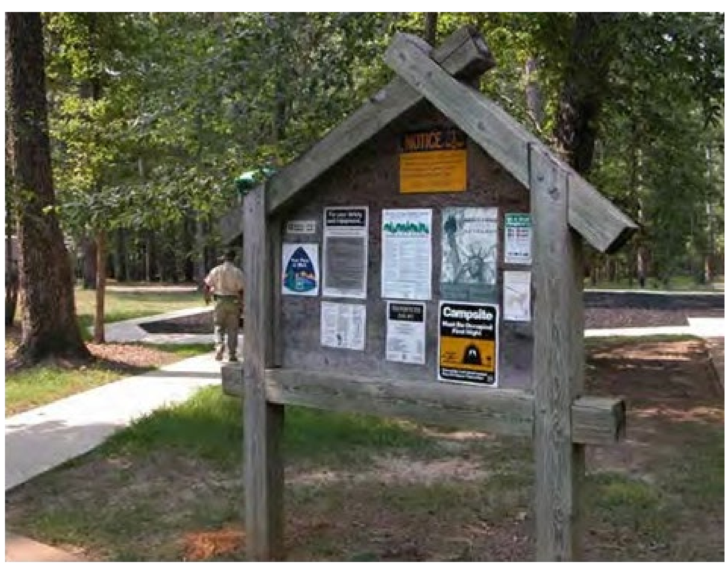
Homemade and illegible posters as well as ill maintained bulletin boards detract from a professional image, even at remote sites. The example below shows a poorly maintained bulletin board with no site or agency identification.



Bulletin boards provide essential information on orientation, recreation opportunities, safety, ethical use, regulations, and visitor responsibilities.

Where appropriate and useful, signs and posters should be bi-lingual. The most common second language in the United States is Spanish. However, on some reservations, the Native language may be more appropriate.

The photo below shows neatly arranged posters on a simple, yet well-constructed bulletin board.



A good bulletin board will:

- be bright, straight, and secure,
- be free of holes, blemishes, random staples, nails, etc.,
- provide fresh content, and up-to-date information (e.g. current maps, emergency information, applicable recreation site regulations),
- display standard and local posters in an organized manner,
- display only legible posters in good condition,
- be free of weeds and brush around the sign, unless part of the planned landscaping,
- keep posters to a minimum, and
- have no unauthorized signs, posters, or bulletins attached to a building.

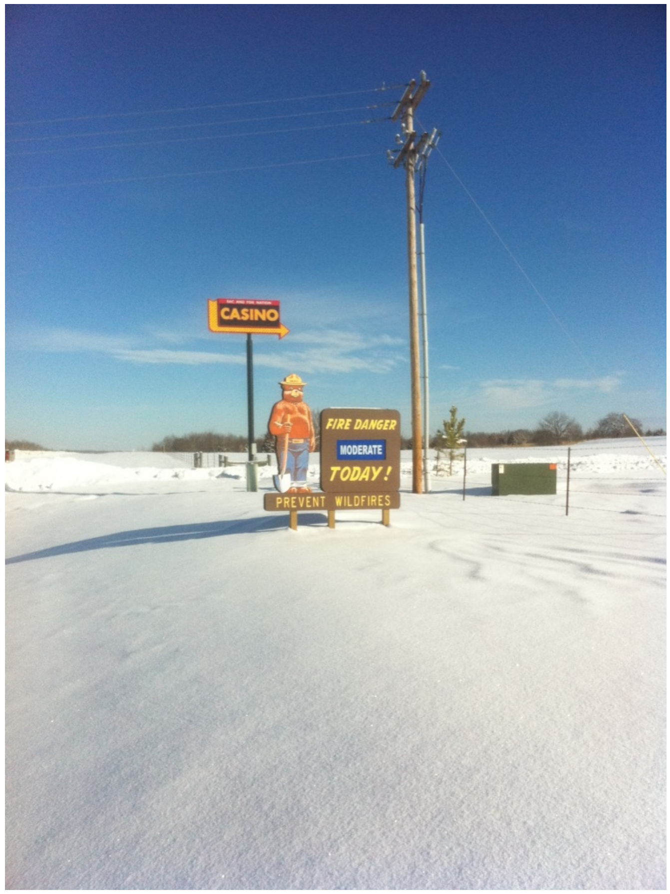
Fire Danger Rating Signs

Fire danger rating signs are used to inform visitors and residents of the current fire danger and any use restrictions. The typical locations for the placement of these signs are at land management offices, near jurisdictional boundaries, fire stations, recreation complexes, and along more heavily travelled roads.

Fire danger rating signs come in several shapes, styles and sizes. Some of the most common are the large Smokey Bear signs with fire danger rating inserts and the half-circle signs with arrows pointing to the rating. The standard is to use five fire danger ratings: Low; Moderate; High; Very High; and Extreme. A sixth rating of "Critical" is used in some jurisdictions.

Fire danger signs also can be used to post fire use restrictions and burning ban notifications.

It is critical that fire danger signs are kept current to reflect the actual conditions, for credibility. In some locations, that means changing the rating every day. If they are not kept current the public begins to lose faith in them as a reliable source of information.



Since these signs may be posted at remote and distant areas across a reservation or jurisdiction, it is important to develop agreements with local hosts or stewards to maintain the daily fire danger ratings. In most jurisdictions, the daily rating is the predicted fire danger at 1300; however, it is sometimes more prudent to use the highest fire danger rating forecast for the day at the location.

It is also important to respect that the fire danger sign represents conditions at its location. While fire danger may be "High" at the headquarters; it may be higher or lower at a location only a few miles away.

Sources

There are several online vendors that distribute fire prevention signs, posters, and other products, including those listed below:

- National Symbols Cache:

  https://www.symbols.gov/.

- National Association of State Foresters:

https://stateforesters.org/smokey-bear/wildfire-prevention.

- UNICOR (Federal Prison Industries)

  https://www.unicor.gov/shopping/ViewCat_m.asp?iStore=UNI&idCategory=1476.

Billboards

Billboards provide a highly visible way to get a message out to a large number of people. They are limited to only a few words and an attractive or eye-catching graphic. They provide a good opportunity to promote a campaign, through use of a logo or simple slogan or key message.

The billboard company may have graphic designers that can help make the message and background graphics stand out. If not, they may be able to recommend a local graphics artist or outdoor advertising company with expertise in design.

Most billboard companies have webpages with the locations of their billboards, viewership numbers and other useful statistics for determining the best location for the message. An Internet search using "outdoor advertising" or "billboards", plus the state, will produce a list of companies operating in the area.

Important: never use Smokey Bear's image on a billboard that is leased. An agreement between the National Ad Council, and the billboard companies, prohibits using Smokey Bear on leased billboards. That space is provided to the Smokey Bear Campaign by the billboard companies as a public service.

Electronic Message Boards and Pylons

Sometimes businesses and highway department electronic message boards can be used to convey fire prevention messages under extreme circumstances. Each owner/operator will have their own standards for what messages they are willing to post on their signs.

Tribal casinos often have large pylons, with electronic messaging boards, to advertise special events and concerts. Some of these casinos are very approachable and willing to post fire prevention messaged in a crisis. For those that are initially resistant, approaching them through tribal administration may reduce the resistance.

V. APPENDIX

Appendix A: NWCG Key Messages for Wildland Fire

These messages were developed with the hope that they will help wildland fire organizations communicate more effectively and consistently about wildland fire. They are not a script. Users are encouraged to incorporate these concepts into their communication in their own words, making the information relevant to their specific situations. They were approved by the NWCG on April 4, 2004.

Key Messages

1) Wildland fire is an essential, natural process.
2) Society's influence has altered historic fire cycles, leading to a dangerous and difficult build-up of vegetation in our wildlands.
3) Land management agencies are committed to a balanced fire program that will reduce risks and realize benefits of fire.
4) 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.
5) Public education is necessary to the success of fire management programs (primarily for use with internal audiences).

Key Messages with Supporting Points for All Audiences

1) Wildland fire is an essential, natural process.
   a. Fire has helped shape our wildlands for thousands of years, and is important for the survival of many plants and animals.
      i. Fire reduces accumulation of vegetation that can inhibit plant growth.
      ii. Some plants and animals depend on fire for survival. Periodic fire stimulates growth, reproduction of plants, and provides wildlife habitat.

         Use local or regional examples (i.e. lodgepole pines need fire to warm their cones, allowing them to open and drop seed)
   b. Fire behaves differently throughout the country.
      i. In addition to fuels (vegetation), fire behavior is affected by weather and terrain.

ii. Virtually all vegetation types in the United States can experience wildland fire.

   Use local or regional examples.

2) Society's influence has altered historic fire cycles, leading to a dangerous and difficult build-up of vegetation in our wildlands.

   a. Social and cultural approaches to wildland fire over the past century have focused on preventing and suppressing all wildland fire. We continue to learn and now have a more complete understanding of the essential role fire plays in our environment.

   b. When paired with the right terrain and weather conditions, dense build-up of vegetation leads to fires that burn hotter, last longer, and spread faster. As a result, these fires become difficult to manage and can threaten areas of residential development.

      i. In addition, excess vegetation and lack of fire in some areas is threatening plant and animal life.

      Use local or regional examples.

3) Land management agencies are committed to a balanced fire program that will reduce risks and realize benefits of fire.

   a) Safety of firefighters and the public is the No. 1 priority of land management agencies

   b) Land management agencies' fire management programs are customized for specific wildland areas to restore the land to more natural conditions, maintain already healthy ecosystems, and protect neighboring communities.

      i. Fire management programs are designed based on a balance of needs including fire suppression, prevention, and fire use. There will always be a need for prevention and suppression to protect people and communities.

   c) Fire is a management tool used to accomplish specific objectives in a plan such as removal of excess vegetation or stimulating plant growth and regeneration.

      i. Naturally occurring fires (lightning, etc.) are either suppressed or allowed to burn in a closely monitored and confined area, based on the fire plan for the area.

ii. Sometimes it may be necessary and/or beneficial for land managers to start fires in a closely monitored and confined area. These fires are referred to as "prescribed fires."

iii. A fire program also may include non-fire treatments to prepare the land before natural or prescribed fire can be applied safely and effectively.

Use local or regional examples.

d) Fire use is a managed process with comprehensive guidelines that prioritize safety and direct the planning and operations of the activity.

4) 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.

a. Fire burns where conditions are right. Fire does not acknowledge jurisdictional boundaries of federal, state, and local agencies; tribes; or private landowners.

b. Agencies, tribes, and communities are working together to understand and accept what it means to live in a fire-prone area and to realize the benefits of managing fire in the wildlands.

i. Agencies and tribes are managing public and tribal lands through overarching fire management plans and programs.

ii. Agencies and tribes also are working to educate local governments and property owners of ways to make their land and property more defensible against wildfire.

Use local or regional examples.

c. People who live and recreate in fire-prone lands assume a certain level of risk and responsibility due to the condition of the surrounding environment.

i. People can live compatibly with fire, if actions are taken to be aware of – and prepared for – local fire conditions.

1. Contact your local, state, or federal agencies, or tribal fire management organization to determine your community's fire conditions and discover tips to reduce your community's fire vulnerability – before a fire starts.

2. The more populated and closer a community is to fire prone areas, the greater the need for proactive fire management.

ii. Smoke from prescribed fire is a sign that steps are being taken to reduce risks and realize benefits of fire. The more land management agencies can plan and manage fire the more they can reduce smoke impacts.

Key Message with Supporting Points for Internal Audiences

5) Public education is necessary to the success of fire management programs.

a. Fire is an important issue for the public, and public understanding is key to our ability to effectively manage wildland fire.

i. For many years, people have learned to fear and avoid fires of all kinds in wildland areas – whether they are natural or started by people.

ii. Individuals act based on their perceptions. Understanding the role of fire will help landowners and land users appreciate and support the efforts of federal, state, local, and tribal fire management organizations.

1. Every year, millions of people visit and use wildland areas across this country. People are fascinated with fire, and we have the opportunity to introduce them to its benefits/role.

iii. We need to motivate landowners and land users to mitigate fire hazards on private property, use recreational fire safely, and support fire management efforts so land management agencies, tribes, and firefighters can focus on public lands. This will ultimately reduce loss of life, property, and natural resources.

b. We need to communicate with our neighbors about the role of wildland fire in a consistent, simple, and memorable way.

i. We need to demonstrate the importance of fire management to the public, agencies, and tribes by continually showing support for these practices.

1. We must educate within our own agencies to ensure that staff understand and support fire management and public education efforts.

ii. We need to be clear in our communications about both the benefits and risks of wildland fire.

Use local or regional examples, such as acknowledging that there is risk of a health impact with smoke, but the benefits of fire management are greater the risks. These examples should recognize that smoke always poses a risk to people with severe respiratory problems.

iii. Often people's perception of fire is shaped by the media's representation of fire. We need to be sure the media understand the role of fire and assist them by providing more comprehensive information about fire and the management issues facing federal, state, tribal, and local fire management organizations.

APPENDIX B: KEY MESSAGING WORKSHEET

Agency/Tribe: ______________ Date: ________________ Developer:_________________

What fire prevention challenge or fire cause is being addressed: __________________________

____

____

Who are you trying to reach with this message (Be specific): ____________________________

____

____

What are you trying to tell them? (Be concise and complete): ____________________________

____

____

Key Message(s):

____

____

Supporting Points:

____

____

____

____

Is it: SHORT: RELEVANT; IMPORTANT; POSITIVE; PLAIN LANGUAGE; APPLICABLE?

APPENDIX C: EXHIBIT CHECKLISTS

Basic Information for Consideration of Exhibit Participation Checklist

Name of Event ____
Location ____
Address____
Dates open to attendees____________________________________
Meetings or other functions held in connection with exhibit_______________
____
Place held if other than event location ___________________________
Transportation between functions and event ________________________
Event is: [ ] Annual [ ] Biennial [ ] Other
Estimate of expected attendance _________ Adults [ ] : Children [ ] : Mixed [ ] :
Admission method:
Members only [ ] General Public [ ] Registered Attendees [ ] Other _________
Total exhibit space ___________ sq. ft; .Configuration_____ x ______ ft.
Rate per square foot _______________________________________
Restrictions on: Promotional Materials ○; Character Appearances ○ ;
Demonstrations ○; Aisle Congestion ○; Other ______________
Premiums for specific location $ ________________ Other $ ________________
Basis of space assignment ___________________________________

Exhibitor services included in space charge:
Decorations ________Furniture ________Electrical _______
Transportation _______Cleaning _________Other_________

Purpose of Event: ____

Who else will exhibit? ______________________________________

Event Sponsor ____
Address ____
Phone ____
Date founded____

How will participation contribute to reducing fire occurrence in my unit? _______
____

Reasons to Exhibit

The Message Checklist

- ☐ Interact with user groups
- ☐ Appeal to special publics
- ☐ Showcase agency mission
- ☐ Create/Project positive agency image
- ☐ Distribute fire prevention/educational materials
- ☐ Deliver A Key Message to specific publics.
- ☐ Interact with specific publics
- ☐ Introduce new services or regulations
- ☐ Understand customer problems
- ☐ Raise awareness of current conditions
- ☐ Obtain feedback
- ☐ Build agency morale
- ☐ Create networks, meet the publics being served
- ☐ Distribute informational materials on specific messages
- ☐ Conduct market research
- ☐ Recruit personnel
- ☐ Reach known clients not being contacted otherwise
- ☐ Reach unknown clients not being contacted
- ☐ Reach existing customers who need personal attention
- ☐ Diffuse complaints
- ☐ Distribute information about policy or regulations
- ☐ Present live "how to" demonstrations
- ☐ Introduce new promotional and educational messages
- ☐ Counter rumors
- ☐ Increase awareness of specific issues

Message(s): being presented: Key Message_______________:______________

____

____

____

Name of Event: ______________________________

Basic Information Summary

*Who are the Attendees?*_________________

Are they a target audience for us? ___*Yes* ___*No*

What is the message for this target group?

____

____

*When is the event?*_____________________

Do we have adequate time to prepare? ___*Yes* ___*No*

*Where is the event?*_________________

Is it inside ? ___*Yes* ___*No*

Why do we want to participate: __________

____

Exhibit Budget Checklist

	Cost Estimated	Cost Actual
1. Exhibit Space		
[ ] Booth rental	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
2. The Exhibit		
[ ] Design and construction	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Graphics	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Refurbishing	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Commercial display/exhibit	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Table cloth	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Literature holders	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Easels	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Tool kit	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Banners	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
3. Furnishing		
[ ] Tables	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Chairs	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Coat racks	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Floor covering	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Computer rental	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Printer rental	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Audiovisual equipment	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
4. Exhibit Services		
[ ] Installing, dismantling & maintenance	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Power and lighting	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Product presentation	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Telephone, fax, Internet	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Rentals	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Security	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______

	Cost Estimated	Actual
5. Shipping and Storage		
[ ] Freight	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Exhibit storage	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Insurance	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
6. Educational Materials		
[ ] Promotional materials	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Literature	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Business cards	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
7. Staffing		
[ ] Reg. Salaries and benefits	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Overtime	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Lodging	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Per Diem	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Out-of-pocket expenses	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Transportation	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Parking	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] Other ___________________	$ _______	$ _______
8. Other		
[ ] ______________________	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] ______________________	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] ______________________	$ _______	$ _______
[ ] ______________________	$ _______	$ _______
Total Exhibit Budget	$ _______	$ _______

Exhibit Materials Inventory

Event:__________________ **Dates:** ______________________

Item	# Needed	# Committed	# Loaded
Tables:			
6'x2.5' (72" x 30")	______	________	_____
8'x2.5' (96" x 30")	______	________	_____
Other _____________	______	________	_____
Folding Chairs	______	________	_____
Table Cloths:			
6'x2.5' (72" x 30")	______	________	_____
8'x2.5' (96" x 30")	______	________	_____
Other _____________	______	________	_____
Displays:			
Pop ups	______	________	_____
Table Tops	______	________	_____
Free Standing Floor Panels	______	________	_____
Literature Racks	______	________	_____
Banners ___________	______	________	_____
Canopy ___________	______	________	_____
Handouts:			
Literature:			
Brochures ____________	______	________	_____
Brochures ____________	______	________	_____
Brochures ____________	______	________	_____
Brochures ____________	______	________	_____
Rack Cards ____________	______	________	_____
Rack Cards ____________	______	________	_____
Rack Cards ____________	______	________	_____
Other ____________	______	________	_____
Promotional/Educational Materials:			
1. ______________________	______	________	_____
2. ______________________	______	________	_____
3. ______________________	______	________	_____
4. ______________________	______	________	_____
5. ______________________	______	________	_____
Miscellaneous:			
Extension Cord _______ length	______	________	_____
Extension Cord _______ length	______	________	_____
Power strips	______	________	_____
Exhibit Kit	______	________	_____
Tool Kit	______	________	_____
Smokey Costume	______	________	_____
Other ______________________	______	________	_____
Other ______________________	______	________	_____

Exhibit Evaluation Checklist

Name of Event ____
Held in ____
City ___________________________________ State ________________
From ________________________________ To __________________
date date

Audience:	Excellent	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor
Quality _______________	○	○	○	○
Quantity _______________	○	○	○	○
Services:				
Management ____________	○	○	○	○
Decorating _____________	○	○	○	○
Publicity ______________	○	○	○	○
Signs _________________	○	○	○	○
Photography ____________	○	○	○	○
Labor _________________	○	○	○	○
Cleaning _______________	○	○	○	○
Trucking _______________	○	○	○	○
Electrical ______________	○	○	○	○
Summary:				
Consider event to be _______	○	○	○	○

Participation:

Will: ○ participate again ○ not participate again
Will: ○ recommend ○ not recommend

General Comments: ____
____
____
____