

Workshop 2: Clear talk about wild fire
Meeting the communications challenges of the wide wildfire audience

Small group mock interview questions

You are a fire official tasked with speaking with local media.

Local or regional reporters are looking for three types of information.:

1. Factual information that affects the public, the firefighters or the fire
2. Focus framing of the day (What are the most important things you want the public to know?)
3. Quotes that share emotion or opinion.

Things to avoid:

Jargon

- false or inflammatory information
- information that contradicts your message
- level of detail that overwhelms the reporter

Local media

August 16 – Blow up day. Expanded evacuations.

It's early evening. You are a local or region reporter speaking with a fire official involved with public information on this fire for that night's TV or radio news or tomorrow's paper. Here are questions you might ask. Change them to reflect your own understanding of the fire, language or style you are comfortable with and skip or modify questions that were answered in response to a different question.:

Q. Big picture: There was a lot going on today. Can you please summarize major fire behavior and crew activities today?

Q. Was anyone injured or harmed today? Were any structures burned?

Q. What is the total fire area today and how many people do you have working on it?

Q. Several evacuation orders were expanded today. What are the concerns that prompted those expansions?

Q. Do you know when people who have been evacuated will be allowed to reenter their homes to retrieve items left behind?

Q. How is traffic flowing on the two highways on the edges of this fire – Hwy 12 and Hwy 93? Are those roads open and passable? Should people avoid them or expect delays?

Q. What do you expect to happen with the fire and the weather tonight and tomorrow?

Q. What resources and crews will be working on the fire tomorrow?

Q. Are there plans for any burning operations tomorrow?

Q. What do you expect the approach to be in the morning? Do you expect planes and helicopters to continue to work the fire?

Q. What are the key points you need the public to know about the fire activity now and when they wake up tomorrow morning?

Q. Is there anything I'm missing that I should have asked or that you'd like to be sure people know?

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National Reporter

August 16 – Blow up day. Expanded evacuations.

Source: You are a research scientist or land manager whose work considers aspects of wildfire. You'd like this story to accurately represent your work and the perspective you bring to the questions. Redirect the questions so your work informs the answer.

Reporter: It's Aug. 17. You've been watching the national fire scene and yesterday the Lolo Fire in Montana blew up and is threatening communities. It seems there's no end in sight. You plan on pulling back and asking big picture questions: What lessons can we learn this fire season to prepare for next fire season? Your reporting so far seems to point you in a couple of different directions that you'd like to hear about from wildfire experts:

- *How does their work reflect the impact climate change is having on fire severity?*
- *Based on their work, what fire prevention or fire-fighting practices might help reduce the severity of fires in years ahead?*

Here are questions you might ask. Change them to reflect your own understanding of the fire, language or style you are comfortable with and skip or modify questions that were answered in response to a different question:

Q. What is your name? What is your job title and what is the focus of your work?

Q. In what ways do modern wildfires inform the research or work you do?

Q. From that perspective, how do you view this year's wildfire season?

Q. *How does your work reflect the impact climate change is having on fire severity?*

Q *How does your work explain what we saw happening on the Lolo Fire today and up to this point?*

Q *Are there specific fire prevention strategies that your work indicates might help reduce the severity of fires in years ahead? Describe how that strategy might be implemented.*

Q. *How does the work you've been doing inform that strategic recommendation?*

Q. Is there anything I'm missing that I should have asked or that you'd like to be sure people know?

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