



Engaging the Public in Prescribed Fire



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Why Communicate?

- Create public acceptance and support
- Address concerns
- Share your objectives
- Build awareness and Public Trust
 - Living with fire
- Build support for program
 - The benefits of telling your story
 - Correct and consistent messaging
- Understand the difference between information sharing and communication



Controlled burns protect forests and our water

- Reduce fire danger to firefighters, residents, and the places we love
- Reduce the fuels that feed catastrophic fires
- Produce much less smoke than severe wildfires

When you see controlled burns during the cool time of year, know that they are helping to protect our healthier forests and community: for today and for future generations.



Build Support

- Trust is a predictor of public approval and support
- Build relationships and trust
 - What are their concerns?
 - What are their values?
 - Do they understand?



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Who is the audience?

- Who needs to know?
 - Primary vs secondary
 - Rural vs urban
- What is their Culture?
 - Language
 - Meeting times
 - Meeting locations
- Are they Receptive or Unreceptive?



How Do You Communicate?

Develop a communication SOP

- Timely
- Manageable
- Effective
- Measurable
- Format
- Consistent terminology

Direct people to the agency communication sources-

- Website, FB page, twitter

Share communication successes/failures/barriers

- Don't use photos of large smoke columns, large flames



Where do you share communication messages?

- Community events
 - Fire festivals
 - Nature festivals

- Traditional media

- Social media



- Email/burn alerts

- Face to face

- Realtors/planners/builders

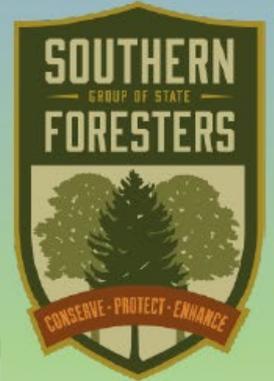


A flyer for Burn Alerts from the U.S. Forest Service. The top features the U.S. Forest Service logo and the text "Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests" and "#BURNALERTS". Below this, it says "Sign up for #BurnAlerts at www.fs.usda.gov/conf or follow @ChattOconeeNF." The main text describes a prescribed fire operation on Friday, April 13, 2016, in the vicinity of Blue Ridge, Georgia. It mentions the "GoodFire" operation and lists the cooperating organizations: U.S. Forest Service, Nature Conservancy, and Georgia Forestry Commission. It also notes that the burn is subject to cancellation if weather conditions are unfavorable. The flyer includes a circular inset image of a mailbox with a sign attached, and a list of benefits of prescribed fire, such as "Maintains healthy forest", "Mitigates fire risk", "Maintains wildlife habitat", "Improves forest health", and "Prevents catastrophic fires".



When and How do you start communicating?

- Start early and update often
 - Don't wait until the day of the burn
- Follow the SOP and delegate
- You don't have to do it alone
 - Coordinate with your partners
 - Don't recreate the wheel
- Be Quick and engaging
 - Short attention spans (3 sec – 2 min)



Why Do We Burn?

Why do we use prescribed fire?

- Ecosystem health
- Hazardous fuel reduction

Prescribed Fire vs Wildfire

- Proactive messaging
- Reactive messaging



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Message Delivery: *Best Spokesperson? A Firefighter!*

- Technique matters
- Steady as a stump
- Heavy breather
- Hold your elbow
- Movement is ok
- Know your audience
- Be real
- Take 2
- Experiment and measure



Working with the Public, Media and Cooperators

- Preparedness - Practice, practice, practice
- Work with PAO/PIO and share with colleagues
 - Continuity of messaging and Don't recreate the wheel
 - <https://southernforests.org/fire/resources-for-partners/resources-for-fire-departments>
- Listen to audience for effectiveness
- Have a conversation
- No worries, your birthday will be fine
- Have fun and smile!



Take Home...

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- [Southern Group of State Foresters-Resources for Partners](#)
- [Why Prescribed Fire.org](#)
- [R8 Prescribed Fire-Facebook](#)
- [US Forest Service-Managing the Land-Prescribed Fire](#)
- [Florida Forest Service-Prescribed Fire in Florida](#)
- [US Fish and Wildlife Service-Fire Management](#)
- [Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Prescribed Fire Explained](#)
- [US Forest Service-Smoke Modeling Tools](#)
- [Tall Timbers](#)
- [Southern Fire Exchange](#)



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