

PREFACE

This wildfire prevention guide has been developed by an interagency development group with guidance from the National Interagency Fire Center, Fire and Aviation Training Support Group under the authority of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The development group is made up of the following representatives:

Pat Durland, Project Leader, USDA, BLM/NIFC, Fire Prevention

Bill Clark, USDI, national Park Service, NIFC, Fire Prevention

Danny Jones, USDA, Forest Service, Sierra National Forest

Tara Johannsen, USDI, BLM, Prineville, Oregon

Bruce Turbeville, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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1.2 AUDIENCE TARGETING

Decide *who* it is you want to reach when staging a special event. Many special events are geared for the entire community and focus on reaching the general public, but you should consider, as a minimum, the following:

Target audiences:

- The Media
- Homeowners
- Vacationers
- Local Government
- Fire Prevention Organizations
- Community Organizations and Associations
- Local Businesses
- Contractors and Builders

Audience characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Education
- Occupation
- Marital Status
- Family Size
- Attitude
- Ethnic Background

5. **Understand the benefits to the partner, as well as to the wildfire prevention program** – As in any partnership, there must be mutual benefits to all parties involved. For the team or event, the enhanced public image created by association with the costumed characters or simply the general promotion of the activity may be the major benefit. Wildfire Prevention agencies achieve increased visibility or possible funding assistance from the partnership. Whatever the situation, the benefits must be clear and mutual to all parties involved.
6. **Operate from a written action plan** – The key to success for executing any event is a written action plan that displays the objectives, responsibilities, timeframes, and logistics. A well written plan will contain these items and help everyone work towards the planned goal.
7. **Have adequate staff to execute the event** – The complexity of activities associated with an event may vary with each event. The number of personnel needed will also vary. As with any project or program, staff positions needed to manage the event in a safe and efficient manner. Refer to your action plan.
8. **Allow adequate lead time** – The amount of lead time to get ready will vary with the type of activities planned. If custom promotional materials or giveaway items are to be produced, you must allow time to design, procure, and produce these items. Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) produced items generally take less lead time. Allowing lead time in the planning stages allows you flexibility to deal with contingencies (emergencies).
9. **Plan for contingency actions** – Things don't always go as planned. You should have alternatives for the key components of your program.

10. **Focus on quality rather than quantity** – It is better to do a few well planned activities than many poorly planned. Start small and add activities as the event manager becomes more experienced. Variety is a key to an effective program but should not be achieved at the expense of quality.

11. **Plan a critique and follow-up** – The courtesy of thanking participants and helpers may help cement a relationship for future events. A formal critique and evaluation of each event is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the event and identify any needed changes.

1.4 PRESENTING THE PROPOSAL

The event you are planning will determine who needs to be contacted. This could be the local grade school principal, the city parks and recreation department, the public relations director for the local sports team, and so on.

When presenting your idea, be clear and concise. You will have more success in selling your proposal if you are organized and prepared. The following presentation basics should be considered:

1. Always make sure the purpose of the presentation is understood by everyone in attendance.
2. Begin the presentation with a statement of purpose and what the expected results will be.
3. Develop an agenda.
4. Don't try to accomplish too much at any one meeting or presentation. Have no more than one or two major objectives.
5. Prepare carefully. Prepare both the material that will be used and the presentation techniques.
6. Outline in detail everything to be covered.
7. Use visual aids, flip charts, overhead transparencies, etc.
8. If a model or example is prepared, it should closely resemble the final product.
9. Rehearse the presentation.
10. Take charge and stay in control.
11. Be flexible.

12. Reach closure by the end of the presentation. Obtain some action or response to make it possible to proceed to the next stage of planning.
13. Summarize as the presentation draws to a close.
14. Set the stage for the next step, which will be the formal program presentation for final approval.

1.5 EVENT PLANNING TEAM

1. **Secure management support** –Without this from the beginning, any special event is unlikely to succeed.
2. **Include key co-workers and partners from other agencies or organizations** – Your team might include representatives from Fire Management, Public Affairs, Procurement, and any other resources that are interested in participating. If you are holding the event in conjunction with other agencies or organizations, ask them to name a representative to the planning team. Keep the core planning group as small as possible—it will be much easier to make decisions and get things done.
3. **Solicit volunteers** – Select as many enthusiastic assistants as possible to help with everything from setting up to cleaning up on the day of the event.
4. **When selecting the Event Planning Team, the following should be considered:**
 - A. Pick competent people. Be sure the people selected to carry out a task have the ability and resources needed to do the job.
 - B. Provide specific objectives.
 - C. Don't interfere.
 - D. Follow-up.
 - E. Reward good performance.

1.6 PRE-EVENT PLANNING

The most effective way to ensure success in the event execution is to prepare an event plan. The following planning components should be considered:

1. Anticipate what the event expectations will be.
2. Write a brief but comprehensive plan.
3. Identify what needs to be done.
4. Decide who will be responsible for each task. For every task, an individual must be responsible for completing it.
5. Determine when each task must be started and completed. The best way to do this is to apply basic scheduling procedures.
 - A. Determine the steps necessary to complete each task as well as the key component activities of each.
 - B. Arrange the tasks sequentially, noting wherever unrelated tasks can be carried on simultaneously, but always making sure that all tasks are arranged in the proper order so that activities that need to precede others are placed early in the sequence.
 - C. Prepare a schedule of specific starting and completion dates for each task, working backwards from the date when the plan is to be completed.
 - D. Prepare a chart of the activities so that you can visually check your progress, determine if the overall schedule (timeline) is being met, and spot potential problems and their impacts before they occur.

6. Identify the expected specific outcome of each planning task.
7. Estimate the budget (funds) necessary.
8. Complete necessary project planning forms.
9. Remember the purpose of the written plan is to produce results.

Event photographer:

The **Photographer** is the person assigned the responsibility of providing a visual history of the event. This documentation phase is very important for local, regional, and national use in reports, newsletters, etc.

Important items to remember:

- Use a 35mm camera with color slide film. Slide film will provide the best flexibility. Slide duplicates and prints (color or black and white) can be reproduced.
- Selection of the camera used should be based on the event conditions such as low light (flash), distance shooting (telephoto) and user abilities (automatic function).
- Do not run out of film! Make sure plenty of film exists on-site for documentation of the event; too much is better than not enough!

Escorts:

The **Escorts** are provided to assist and supervise the costumed character during activities at an event. The escorts should be well-versed in the various activities and limitations that can be accomplished by the costumed character. Essentially the escorts are the “eyes and ears” for the costumed character. The escorts must be aware of everything going on around them. The safety of persons associated with the event (especially the person in costume) may be contingent on the action of the escorts. Whether it is a rodeo, baseball game or other event, there are hazards which must be allowed for. It is the responsibility of the escort to be aware of all such hazards. All agencies involved in the event should be allowed to provide an escort wearing the appropriate field uniform, as per agency policy. Other duties of the escorts include:

- Participate in the pre-event briefing. Obtain “schedule of event activities” from the event manager. This schedule should provide clear direction and proper timetables for activities.
- Make sure the character is on time and at the proper location. Most events are run on a timeline, and the character and escorts must be ready at a moment’s notice.
- Do not try to be more than an escort, i.e., photographer, award presenter, etc. Each person assigned a task should feel comfortable in doing their part and not try to do anything else.
- Assist with costume character changes.
- Do not leave the character unattended. Visibility while wearing the costume is limited.
- Make sure the character gets appropriate rest breaks. The costume can be dangerously hot for the person wearing it. Rest breaks will provide an opportunity for the costumed person to get out of the costume, drink liquids and cool off.

(No alcoholic beverages!)

- Do not indulge in “horseplay” or consume alcoholic drink while in uniform. Remember the image of the agency and safety first.
- Be responsible for the costume. Security must be provided for the costume at all times. The person sharing the responsibility for the security or the costume is the person who will be wearing the costume during the event activities.
- Be assertive, initiate interaction with the spectators. The escorts must be aware of everything going on about them, and be cognizant of opportunities to interact as they arise. Be courteous to the public.

Costumed character:

The **Costumed Character** can be the focus of the event. It is important the person selected to serve as the costumed character be experienced or trained at doing the job. The success of the event could rest on how well this part of the job is performed. The costumed character's duties include:

- Possess a basic understanding of the character standards and guidelines. Uphold the character image and ethics.
- Be able to perform activities dictated by the event, i.e., throw the first pitch, kick a soccer ball, climb stairs, etc. The costumed character should, ideally, be a person in good physical condition who can stand the rigors of the heat generated while wearing the costume, as well as perform the other physical duties involved with the event.
- Dress appropriately for being in the costume, i.e., shorts, T-shirt, etc., depending on weather conditions and geographical area.
- Be prompt; allow plenty of time for contingencies, i.e., traffic jams on the way to the event, locating the dressing room facilities at site, or even tying-in with the event manager and others of the event party.
- Be an active participant in the pre-event briefing. Understand the event schedules and activities to ensure a smooth and professional flow of activities at the event.
- Work closely with the escorts to ensure the safety of yourself, other individuals and small children gathering close around. Vision can be limited in the costume.
- Ensure security of the costume when not in use. Maintain the costume properly.

- Be courteous to the public at all times. With physical demands placed upon the wearer of the costume, he/she may at times, get annoyed with children or young adults. The best thing to do is keep calm and ask for assistance from the escort. The escorts are there to provide a buffer between the costumed character and the public.
- Be assertive, initiate action, and interact with the spectators. The person wearing the costume must always be cognizant that the escorts are there to provide the “lead” and will generally be the ones to initiate the action or mingling with the crowd. Posing for pictures is encouraged, and signing autographs is a possibility.

Additional event personnel:

The **Agency Public Affairs Officer** can be invaluable. They can provide assistance with pre and post-event publicity, activity documentation, liaison with the news media, photography and announcer scripts.

Use **Volunteers** to augment your workforce and reduce program cost. Examples of organizations that may be willing to volunteer are volunteer fire departments, scouting organizations, senior citizens, Volunteers-in-Prevention, local equestrian clubs, community service clubs, high school activity clubs, etc.

1.8 CHARACTER APPEARANCE GUIDELINES

The costumed character's popular image can be utilized in many ways to focus attention to fire/life safety education programs.

Guidelines for the character appearances are:

1. The person wearing the costume must exhibit appropriate animation to be effective. Express sincerity and interest in the program by moving hands, head, and legs.
2. There shall be at least one uniformed escort to accompany the character.
3. After donning the costume, the escort shall inspect the suit. Check for the following:
 - Is the costume complete?
 - Electronics working properly? (speaker, fan)
 - No visual damage to the costume?
 - Zipper out of sight?
 - Face shield clean?
 - Head adjustment complete?
 - Accessories properly attached?
4. A private dressing room is necessary for putting on and taking off the costume.
5. The costumed character should not force itself on timid children or people. Do NOT walk rapidly toward small children.
6. The costume becomes hot to the wearer after a very short period (even with the fan). Moderate success has been noted with the use of "ice vests" utilizing a compartmentalized vest and "Blue Ice." In warm weather, limit appearances to 15-20 minute segments.

7. After each appearance, check the costume for needed repairs or cleaning. Note: Cleaning instructions are on the inside of the box.
8. Small problems arise with wearing the costume that can be minimized with advance preparation. Be aware of general reaction patterns of various age groups. They are categorized as follows:
 - **1 to 2 years old** – This age group usually does not react to the character. If children do react, it could be with fear.
 - **2 to 4 years old** – Children will react with some fear. It is best to approach slowly.
 - **4 years old** – Some children are very timid. Many cover behind their parents and may not approach the character. Stand still and let them walk to you.
 - **5 years old** – Most children will approach the character and will want to shake his hand or hug him.
 - **6 to 8 years old** – Children are curious about the suit and try to detect flaws. This is also the most interested group.
 - **9 to 13 years old** – This can be an effective group, but the character may need to offer encouragement. It seems best to ask questions and attempt to establish a teacher-student relationship. It may be difficult to control the behavior of a group of children if too much familiarity is established.
 - **13 to 21 years old** – This group might ignore the character. Some interesting conversations occur if groups include both boys and girls.
 - **Adults** – Conversation should not exceed 30 seconds unless initiated by the other person.

9. **School Programs**

- The character's appearance in schools is effective in classroom situations or assembly programs.
- In early elementary grades, a surprise visit by the character may be the most effective.
- In later elementary grades, the character is most effective when used as a reinforcement tool for material already presented.
- Classroom situations should have the following elements:
 - Establishment of rapport.
 - Explanation of the need for fire/life safety by the character.
 - Question and answer period or summary with the character reinforcing the messages.

10. **Large Crowds**

- It is suggested that the character have at least two escorts for purposes of crowd control and effective contacts.
- When shaking hands, the character should put his hand where the other party can reach it. Do not grab hands that are extended. Children should be allowed to touch him if they wish.
- Contact should normally be brief. Uniformed personnel should speak to as many individuals as possible.

11. **Special Education Children**

- Approach special children slowly.
- The child or adult in attendance will usually set the behavior pattern for the character.
- Allow blind children to touch the character from helmet to muscles.

1.9 EVENT LOGISTICS

This section deals with “how to make it happen.” These guidelines will help you organize a professional, smooth running, and polished event. The guidelines address the following:

- Sizing up the event location
- Safety considerations
- Equipment needs
- Event rehearsals
- Event follow up

Sizing-up the event location – Once you have determined which activities will take place during the event, you will need to evaluate the following:

- **Entrances and exits** – You'll need to know where to enter and exit the event.
- **Public entry gates** – Knowledge of these locations will help you determine the most effective prevention signing and promotional material distribution.
- **Concessionaire booths** – Locate your activities and displays where they will not interfere with other concessions and where your efforts will not be overshadowed or disrupted.
- **Banner space** – Check with your Event Contact regarding banner space and limitations. Always check before hanging your banners. Banners should be at least 36" x 72". Potential spaces for hanging banners include public entrances, grandstands, fences, etc. Look for high traffic, high visibility areas that do not conflict with other advertisements. Hang banners and posters neatly and remove promptly after the event.

- **Parking space for agency vehicles** – Your parking area should be pre-determined by your Event Contact. Park in a manner that will not interfere with event operations. Display parking permits in a highly visible location.
- **Dressing room for costumed character** – Work directly with the event committee or contact in determining the best location. Avoid areas with heavy traffic, such as public restrooms. Provide for privacy.

Safety considerations – Minimize interference with other event activities. All activities should take place in areas that provide maximum safety to participants. Costumed characters attract children. . .this can create a hazard if not properly controlled. Some important safety precautions for event management are:

- **Watch for potential ground hazards** – Be on the lookout for cables, ropes, boards and uneven ground at the event site.
- **Avoid restricted areas** – Please honor the wishes of sponsors, partners, or cooperators in staying clear of such areas.

Equipment/supply needs – Type and quality of supplies and equipment are dependent upon the planned activities. Some basic items will include:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Character costume | • Promotional materials |
| • Fire Prevention posters | • Banners |
| • Novelty items for VIP's | • Table and chairs |
| • Camera and film | • Video camera and tapes |
| • Staple gun and tape | • First-aid kit |

Event rehearsals – Not to be confused with a full dress rehearsal, this is simply a walk-through with agency participants to familiarize them with the layout of the area and the sequence of events.

Remember – (Applicable to all event scenarios)

- Be prepared! Like any production, the event performance is subject to last minute changes. You must be able to adapt to these changes to ensure a successful event! Plan for any contingency!
- Be available! The event manager should be easily accessible to the team representative, other event team members.
- Be flexible! Activities related to the event and such things as rodeo livestock are unpredictable. This can result in unscheduled changes in the sequence of activities. Plan for the “worst case scenario” and develop contingencies accordingly, during the planning stages of the event.
- Be alert to potential hazards!
- Be sure to involve children when possible! Children are effective attention-getters. Remember that some smaller or younger children may be frightened by their first encounter with the character.

Event follow up – The courtesy of thanking participants and helpers will help cement the relationship for future events. A formal critique and evaluation of each event is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the project and identify needed changes.

1.10 TIMETABLE FOR EVENTS

3-6 months before the event:

- Formalize agreements for financing the event with all organizations and agency representatives.
- Select site for event and formalize cost, if any, for facilities and services with the facility manager
- Plan the program for the event.
- Order all materials and supplies needed.
- Begin publicity; mail out brochures.

3 months before the event:

- Check to be sure all materials and supplies have been received.
- Check with the manager of event site for detailed arrangements.
 - Event schedule
 - Layout of facilities
 - Equipment available
 - Any logistic concerns
- Give event host copy of your schedule.

2 months before the event:

- Deadline for all equipment and material arrangement.

3 weeks before the event:

- Mail out publicity a second time.
- Send out invitations for the event.

1 week before the event:

- Prepare press kits.
- Review event activities, roles and responsibilities.

Day before the event:

- Inspect site (if necessary).
- Check on catering, entertainment, etc., provided by community partners.
- Set up and check out equipment (podium, stage, sound systems, etc.).
- Review schedule with team players.
- Set up event area (if necessary).
- Call media contacts to confirm attendance.

Day of the event:

- Post signs.
- Set up sign-in table.
- Greet media and guests.
- Begin and conduct event.

1 week after event:

- Mail a follow-up letter to event participants expressing appreciation for their participation.
- Provide follow-up with media as appropriate.

1.11 PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Promotional materials are a vital component of any fire prevention program. Promotional materials are a marketing and advertising tool designed to emphasize a particular subject or event. Materials such as posters, trading cards, activity books, etc., serve as a reminder of the activity to the participant. There is a high level of retention of these materials by the targeted audience which results in an increase in the residual effect of the fire prevention message. Selecting the appropriate number and types of materials is a key action that should occur in the initial planning stage. Your choice of materials can be best determined through review of the fire prevention objective and the formulation of an activity action plan.

Types of Promotional Material (not all inclusive)

- Posters
- Trading Cards
- Milk Caps
- Wrist Bands
- Rally Rags
- Note Pads
- Sunglasses
- Waist Packs
- Water Bottles
- Buttons
- School Pouches
- Color Sheets
- Comic Books
- Games
- Badges
- Action Figures
- Tattoos
- Sports Balls
- School Folders
- Slammers
- Bats
- Growth Charts
- Pennants
- Postcards
- Erasers
- Lapel Pins
- Pens
- Balloons
- Cups
- Book Covers
- Activity Books
- Teacher Guides
- Plaques
- Color Books
- Tablets
- T-Shirts
- Sun Visors
- Calendars
- Helmets
- Sport Gloves
- Bookmarks
- Wallets
- Pencils
- Stickers
- Seat Cushions
- Key Tags
- Hats
- Plush Toys
- Certificates

1.12 RECEIVING/DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS

Distribution of materials will pose one of the most difficult tasks you will have. It makes no difference how hard you try, there will be problems. The problems will center in the following areas:

- Who should receive the materials?
- How much of the product needs to be sent?
- How do you handle written requests?
- How is the product going to be distributed?
- Are there interagency considerations?
- Is there a potential for large quantities available? If so, special arrangements must be made.
- Assure that event materials are available to agency heads.
- If possible, distribution should be made directly to the event to minimize the handling.

2.2 EVENT SUMMARY

The following are general overall expectations that should be derived from various types of events.

The events are divided into the following categories:

- 2.21 Community Involvement
- 2.22 School Programs
- 2.23 Campaigns
- 2.24 General
- 2.25 Special Events
- 2.26 Media Events
- 2.27 Sports Programs

Each category should provide a certain level of expected accomplishment for the wildfire prevention objectives. These expectations are defined as:

- **Event characteristics** – Elements that should be achieved.
- **Publicity opportunities** – Types of media to be considered.
- **Community outreach** – The opportunities for community involvement.
- **Promotional material** – Recommended material for that type of event.

2.21 EVENT SUMMARY MATRIX

ACTIVITY: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Type of Event: Town Meetings, Meetings of Service Clubs, Planning Commissions, Homeowner Associations, Volunteer Fire Department Activities, and Hospital Tours

EVENT CHARACTERISTICS:

- Individual Contact
- Group Contact
- On-site Ceremony
- VIP Participation
- Character Appearance
- High Visibility Advertising
- Media Contacts
- Information Sharing
- Photo Opportunities
- Community Outreach
- Promotional Opportunities
- Training

PUBLICITY OPPORTUNITIES:

- Public Service Announcement (PSA) - Television
- PSA - Radio
- PSA - Written
- News Releases
- Banners
- Internal Communication
- Electronic Board
- Magazines
- Press Kit / Media Packets
- Interviews
- Printed Material
- Infomercials
- Interagency
- News Conferences
- On-site Messages
- Signing
- Billboards

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

- Material Distribution
- Speaker Bureau
- Contests
- Tours
- Corporate Sponsors
- Community Games / Fire - Police
- Fund Raisers
- Homeowner Associations
- Group Contacts - Service Clubs
- Public Schools
- Private Schools
- 10K Jog-a-Thons
- Adopt-a-Program
- Senior Citizens
- Library Programs
- Town Hall
- Volunteer Fire Department
- Key Contact

