

Safety And Travel Tips

For Media Visiting A Prescribed Fire Or A Wildfire

On The Francis Marion And Sumter National Forests

1.	Your primary contact	In Columbia: Stephanie Neal Johnson, (803) 561-4091, cell (803) 920-6167 At the scene:
2.	You've just pulled up to a fire scene or into fire camp - who should you talk to first?	When arriving at an active fire scene, you should ask for the "Information Officer." Please work with that person to obtain access to the fire rather than interfering with the firefighting personnel. In a fire camp, look for an "Information Officer (IOF)" sign near a fire camp's main entrance, or ask to speak to an Information Officer.
3.	Incident Information Officers will escort you	If you desire access on or near a fire, you must be escorted. For your safety, a trained Incident Information Officer will escort you to the fire scene. These Officers will escort you as close to the fire's front line as is safe, and are trained to keep an eye on fire conditions to ensure your safety. Please follow their instructions. Sometimes, when more media than information staff are present, you may need to wait for an escort or go along with other media representatives.
4.	If you value your life, don't go it alone	Please don't strike out on your own. NEVER enter barricaded access routes. Wildfires can move fast, and unpredictably, and fire personnel need to know where you are at all times in case of evacuation.
5.	Transport to remote wildfire scenes and camps	Incident Air Operations Staff cannot airlift media staff to remote fire scenes. Helicopter space is extremely limited. Generally, media must provide their own transportation to the fire.
6.	Radio communication for fly-ins	TV helicopter crews must make contact with an Information Officer and coordinate with an Air Attack Supervisor before attempting to fly over a wildfire, land at a fire camp or scene, or traverse the path of aircraft dropping retardant or water. The Information Officer and/or the Air Attack Supervisor will provide you with frequencies and information on flight restrictions.
7.	Electronic logistics	Incident Information staff often cannot provide access to dedicated phone lines to transmit electronic reports. Available lines are scarce and expensive. Please also be aware that electricity sometimes is not available at remote locations, and that cell phone coverage is spotty in some locations on the forests.

8.	Gear YOU must wear	<p>If you desire access on or near a fire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must wear all-leather boots with at least 8-inch tops and hiking or vibram-type soles. Do not wear boots with steel toe plates. You will have to provide these boots. <p>The Forest Service will loan you the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fire-retardant shirt and pants, if they are available in your size. (Some media outlets purchase customized NomEx pants and shirts.) • A plastic hard hat (Metal hard hats can conduct electrical shocks) • Leather Gloves • Fire shelter
9.	Gear you should NOT wear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business suit, high heels or any other garb that could prove treacherous in rough terrain. • Synthetics. Man-made fabrics melt or start on fire at high temperatures.
10.	Inmate photographs require advance approval	<p>Photographs of this type usually are not permitted on fire incidents. Please check with your escort before photographing inmate firefighters working on a fire.</p> <p>All other photography is generally permitted.</p>