

Wildfire Risk Communication: this presentation brought to you by

Team Wildfire

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Wildfire Risk Communication

Introduction:

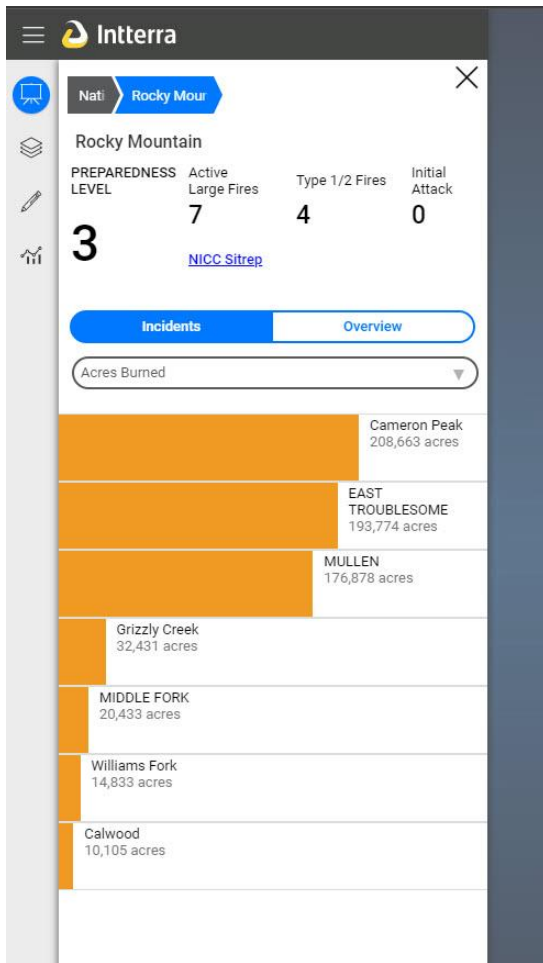
“The oldest fire recorded on Earth has been identified from charcoal in rocks formed during the late Silurian Period, around 420 million years ago...the first extensive wildfires recorded came somewhat later, dating from around 345 million years ago, the early Carboniferous Period.”

(Scott, A., *Time*)

<https://time.com/5295907/discover-fire/>



Image: <http://www.geologypage.com>



Wildfire Risk Communication

The Combustion Process

What makes a fire burn? Why is one fire a roaring inferno while another barely creeps along? Fire is a chemical reaction in which energy in the form of heat is produced. When forest fuels burn, there is a chemical combination of the oxygen in the air with woody material, pitch and other burnable elements found in the forest environment. This process is known as combustion. Combustion is a chain reaction chemically similar to photosynthesis in reverse. Photosynthesis requires a large amount of heat which is furnished by the sun. The Combustion process releases this heat. The tremendous amount of heat that is produced in the burning process is the major reason that the suppression of wildfires is such a difficult task and why the use of prescribed fire is a complex and exacting process requiring knowledgeable and experienced people.

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/forestry_wildlife/fire/combustion.htm

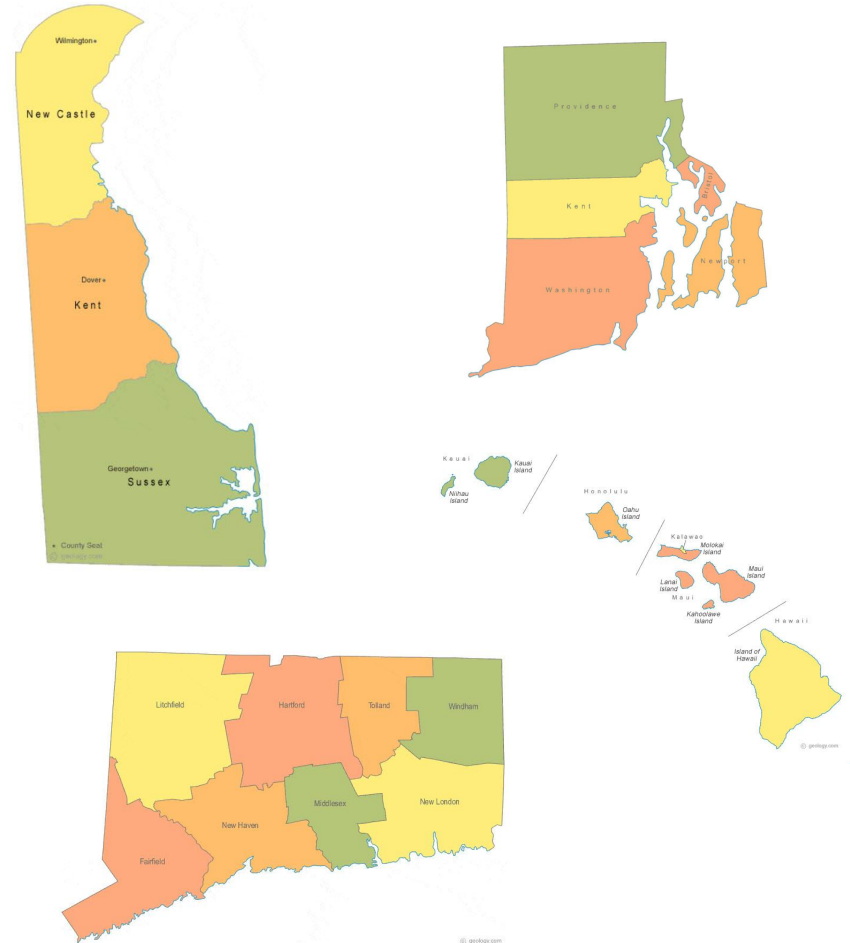
<https://maps.nwcg.gov/sa/#/!/%3F/%3F/39.0091/-107.3984/5>

Wildfire Risk Communication

According to statistics at the National Interagency Fire Center, wildfires have consumed 8.6 million acres of land in the United States in 2020, the result of 47,000 fires. Many are still burning. That is the equivalent area in square miles of the four smallest states in America: Hawaii, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware.

<https://www.nifc.gov/fireInfo/nfn.htm>

<https://statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/national-us/uncategorized/states-size>



Wildfire Risk Communication



The National Interagency Fire Center has a five tier “Preparedness Level” that might be characterized as “risk communication.” It is currently at Level Three;

“Mobilization of resources nationally is required to sustain incident management operations in the active Geographic Areas (GA's). National priorities established as a necessary measure to address the heavy and persistent demand for shared resources among active GA's. Significant wildland fire activity is occurring in multiple geographic areas, with Incident Management Teams (IMTs) actively engaged. Mobilization of resources through the National Interagency Coordination Center is moderate to heavy. Potential for emerging significant wildland fires is normal for the time of year.”

https://www.nifc.gov/fireInfo/fireinfo_prepLevels.html

Wildfire Risk Communication

Generally risk communication will involve a discussion on the negative impacts as well as the probability that they occur, the effects they would have and the possible solutions to reduce the risk. All this should promote a greater understanding of the phenomenon and boost awareness on actual exposure to the risk, in parallel with orienting decision-making to reduce vulnerability.

http://efirecom.ctfc.cat/docs/RECOM%20ENGLISH_final.pdf



SEVEN CARDINAL RULES IN COMMUNICATION OF RISK¹

1. **Accept and include the target group as an ally.** The ultimate objective is to ensure an informed, involved, interested, prudent public, prepared to cooperate.
2. **Carefully plan and evaluate efforts.** Different aims, audiences and media require different actions.
3. **Listen to the specific worries of the public.** People usually worry more about confidence, credibility, specific competence, impartiality and empathy than about statistics and details.
4. **Be honest, frank and open.** Confidence and credibility are difficult to obtain, and once lost it is almost impossible to recover.
5. **Work with other trustworthy sources.** Conflicts and disagreements between organisations makes communication with the public much more difficult.
6. **Be aware of the needs of the media.** The media tend to be more interested in policies than in the risk, in simplicity rather than complexity, in danger rather than safety.
7. **Speak clearly and with compassion.** Never allow your efforts to prevent the tragedy of an illness, injury or death from being recognised. People may understand the information on risk, even if they do not agree, or are not satisfied with the management performed.

Wildfire Risk Communication

The creation of a press office which simultaneously develops a trust-based relationship with the media and institutions, can facilitate the management of information during the emergency. Other actions which can be implemented are:

Performance of joint press conferences with all actors participating in the management of the emergency (fire fighting and rescue services, civil protection, police, forestry service, etc.) to unify, overall, information and transmit an image of coordination and collaboration, which is also required from the local actors and the population.

http://efirecom.ctfc.cat/docs/RECOM%20ENGLISH_final.pdf



<https://www.thesentinel.com/>



Wildfire Risk Communication

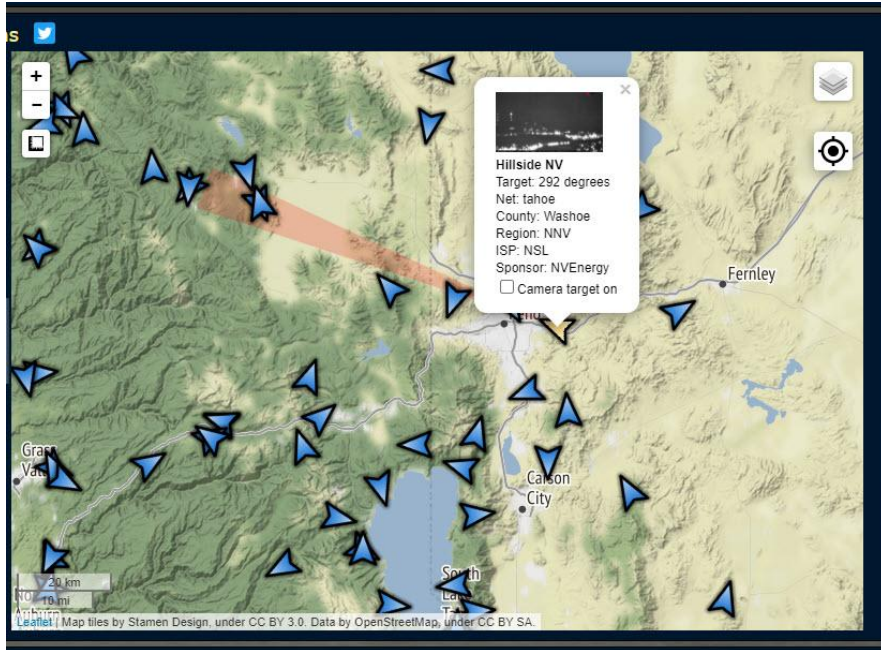
Additional Resources:

Nevada Seismological Laboratory, © 2020.
Mackay School of Earth Sciences & Engineering
College of Science

Certainly the responsibility for wildfire awareness falls on the shoulders of the individual as those who are engaged on the front lines are extremely busy. Simply put, it means that defensible space and an evacuation plan and survival kit needs to be a given for every household.

In addition to that preparedness, other resources are available such as the awareness network, a firecam system located at ALERTWildfire.

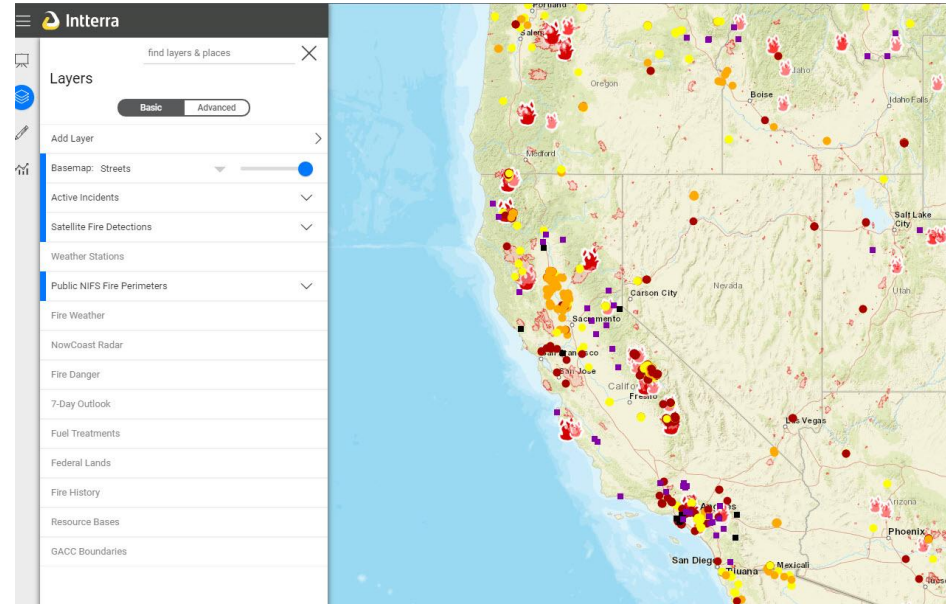
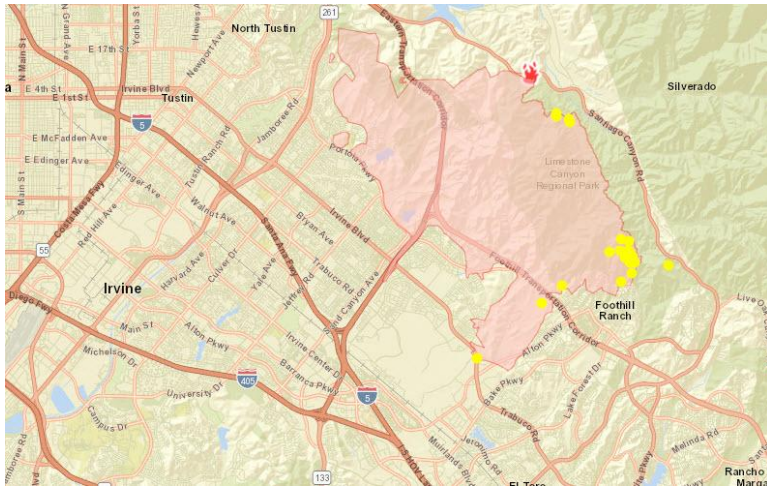
<http://www.alertwildfire.org/tahoe/?camera=Axis-Hillside>



Wildfire Risk Communication

Another useful link to stay informed about current fires is what was formerly known as “Geomac,” or Geospatial Multi-Agency Coordination, and now found at Interra, or “National Fire Situational Awareness.”

<https://maps.nwcg.gov/sa/#/%3F%3F/39.1343/-115.9804/6>



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Contact Us

For all other inquiries please call the main NIFC phone number at 208-387-5512 and the receptionist will help you. Please email your comments and questions to:

BLM_FA_NIFC_Comments@blm.gov

[NIFC phone directory \(PDF\)](#)

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