



MONTANA

**Montana Wildland Fire
Messaging Tool Kit for
Destination Management
Organizations**

2026

Overview

This document is intended to assist visitor-facing organizations with providing messaging to visitors during summer months around wildland fires in Montana. The goals of this document are to:

1. **Keep visitors safe during wildland fires**
2. **Help visitors find fun and safe ways to spend their time in Montana if their plans are affected by wildland fires**
3. **Minimize the negative impact on local tourism and economies**

Visitors likely won't understand the scale of the situation and will be unsure of the difference between air quality levels or a fire's severity. They may also not have a reference point for where things are in relation to one another or how big Montana is (just because one community is impacted doesn't mean the whole state is off-limits). It's important to inform visitors about what is open, even if some areas or accommodations are closed.

DMOs and other visitor-facing organizations can encourage safe travel by spreading the word about where visitors can travel and what they can experience.

This plan contains information on communications with the media, amplifying safety messages from trusted local and state agencies, and producing positive messages for visitors. Areas highlighted in yellow are meant to be edited to apply to your specific agency or area.

This tool kit includes:

- **Sample Talking Points**
- **Draft Media Advisories, News Releases and Sample Statements**
- **Social Media Ideas**

Talking Points

- Don't dwell on the negative. Many Montana communities rely on our state's robust tourism economy, and keeping messaging informative and positive is key.
- Educate visitors. Inform them about what they can do and where they can go. While some areas may not be able to welcome visitors at this time, it's important to remind folks that there are many places eager to host visitors.



- Accuracy is vital. Be specific about communicating which areas and attractions are open. You know best what's happening on the ground — what's open, what will soon be open and which businesses are ready to serve guests.
- Never speculate about what you don't know.
- Events are excellent reasons for people to visit. Let visitors know what events are happening in your community right now and in the coming days, weeks and months that they might be interested in planning a trip around. Direct them to places where they can get more information.

Sample Quotes

- We want visitors to know they can still have their Montana adventure here — it just may look a little different.
- Many events are still happening in our area as planned — everything from live music events to rodeos throughout the summer. [insert a specific example of an event coming up.]
- You can visit [insert local organization website link] to find more events, itineraries and information about traveling to all our communities. For the latest, check with our local chambers, convention and visitors bureaus and social media pages.
- We want to remind visitors to “know before you go.” Before visiting, check with local businesses for hours of operation and ability to accommodate. Make reservations in advance.
- Please pack your patience, understanding and sense of adventure — you will find many things you were looking for.

Sample Press Releases/Media Advisories

Even though DMOs should not be the drivers of information, there are opportunities to add context to local coverage and secure secondary stories. Before a fire happens, create top 5 or 10 lists of things to do indoors or ways to stay cool so you have content and ideas ready. Activities to put on the list include museums, local food and drink establishments, art galleries, indoor music venues, etc.



Example 1. Press Release — Too Hot or Smoky to Recreate Outside

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name

Phone Number

Email

Smoky Skies Don't Have To Mean Canceled Plans for Visitors

[Area, MT) – (Date) – As air quality restrictions from current wildfires in [area] go into effect and residents and visitors are encouraged to stay indoors, [DMO name] is reminding visitors there is no shortage of things to do — even if vacation plans may look different than originally planned.

“For the [X] number of visitors who come to our area every year, a wildfire might be totally unknown territory that can put a damper on vacation plans,” said [insert name, title, and organization]. “Luckily, [insert community/area] has many exciting indoor activities like [X] and [X] that visitors can still enjoy while they’re in Montana.”

For a list of nearby museums and other indoor attractions, visit [DMO website].

Additionally, [DMO name] organization has a top 10 list of activities to keep people cool and safe if wildfires are in the area. [List 10 local/regional activities.]

For visitors to [area], follow [X] to stay up to date on changing weather conditions and air quality. [insert local organization] will continue to post relevant updates to our social media channels from trusted sources.

To avoid breathing problems or other symptoms from smoke, people in the area should:

- Limit outdoor exertion during such conditions, including hiking, running and other strenuous recreation.
- Drink a lot of water. Staying hydrated can keep your airways moist, which will help reduce symptoms of respiratory irritation such as scratchy throat, runny nose and coughing.
- Avoid driving in smoky areas. If you do need to drive in these areas, keep your windows rolled up and vents closed. If you need air-conditioning, set your system to re-circulate to avoid bringing smoke into your car.



- People with concerns about health issues, including asthma or other respiratory problems, should follow their breathing management plans, keep medications on hand and contact health care providers if necessary.

For more information about travel to the area, go to [\[insert local organization website link\]](#). For more information about local fire conditions, go to mtfireinfo.org.

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Example 2. Press Release – Fire in the Area

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name

Phone Number

Email

During Fires, **[DMO Name]** Provides Guidance to Visitors in **[Your Region]**

(Area, MT) – (Date) As **[Region]** is facing closures due to **Stage X** fire restrictions for those traveling in the area, **[DMO name]** is providing alternatives for visitors to make the most of their Montana vacation.

“Wildfires can put a damper on vacations for the **[X]** number of visitors who come to our area,” said **[X person, title]**. “It’s important to follow the rules about campfires, evacuations and air quality to stay safe, avoid fines and let firefighters and first responders do their jobs. If vacation plans have been affected by these closures, we want visitors to know there are many other things to do and areas to go to have an unforgettable Montana experience.”

For more information about nearby activities, lodging and indoor experiences, go to **[DMO website.]**

[DMO Name] also has a top 10 list of activities to keep people cool and safe while wildfires are in the area. **[List 10 local/regional activities.]**

For visitors to our area, follow **[X]** to stay up to date on the fire, changing weather conditions and air quality. **[DMO Name]** organization will continue to post relevant updates to social media channels from trusted sources.



“Even though vacation plans may change, there are still many fun activities that will give you the Montana adventure you were looking for,” said [X].

For more information about travel to the area, go to [DMO website]. For more information about local fire conditions, go to mtfireinfo.org.

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Social Media

General Social Media Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Focus on the positives and the businesses, services and experiences that are open. Always emphasize what is open first, then list what is closed if necessary.
- Assist visitors by redirecting them to alternative activities.
- Encourage visitors to continue their travels in Montana. Remind them this is a big state with unaffected areas and hidden gems.
- Post photos of what is open.
- Post close-up photos — of people, flowers, animals, food, drinks, etc. — rather than photos of fire plumes or damaged landscapes and buildings.
- Post links to activities that can be done safely and in more controlled environments (dining, breweries/cideries/distilleries, concerts, museums, theaters, local shopping, spas, etc.).
- Remind visitors to check ahead with their destinations to see which services, businesses and activities are open.
- Share information and/or posts from official state and local agencies to keep visitors updated with on-the-ground information relevant to them.
- If sharing information from sources other than state and local agencies, check the facts before posting. State the facts only. Do not make assumptions, speculate or repeat unverified information.
- Proofread your copy before posting. Grammatical and spelling errors can be distracting and take away from your message.
- Only post images/videos your organization has permission to use. If unsure, ask the photographer for permission to use the photo before posting it.
- If you have permission to use someone else's photographs, give the photographer credit wherever possible.



DON'T:

- Post or share photos of fires/burning flames. Amplifying these images from visitor-focused organizations only “fans the flames.”
- Use words like “indefinitely” when referring to closures (roads, businesses). Use “currently” or “temporarily” if uncertain when something might open.
- Dwell on the negative. Instead, work to help visitors have a great vacation despite some hurdles.
- Share a stream of photos and news updates of the crisis in real time on your personal or company/organization's social media channels — leave that to the organizations that are directly responding to the event. Remember, your audience is visitors and potential visitors: Show them the beauty of your community, other activities that are still available, and practical information that will help them adjust their plans as needed.
- Use grainy or poor-quality images/videos.
- Post photos you don't know the origin of or don't have the appropriate rights or permission to use.

Sample Social Media Posts

- If your travel plans have been affected by fire/air quality in [X town], please visit [webpage] for alternate lodging and ideas to make sure you still have a great adventure in Montana.
- How can you help prevent and stay safe around wildfires in Montana? Be fire aware and know this important information before heading out. Visit mtfireinfo.org for current fire stages and restrictions.
- When there's a wildfire in the area, act responsibly to keep yourself and others safe. Firefighters need space to work, so give them plenty of room. Don't fly drones near a fire — doing so is illegal, and they can get in the way of firefighting equipment. To see what areas are closed, go to mtfireinfo.org.
- Keep updated about our area's current fire stage at mtfireinfo.org.
- Everyone loves a good campfire, but no one loves starting a wildfire. Check campfire restrictions before lighting a fire, and make sure you know how to maintain and extinguish your campfire properly. Never leave a campfire unattended.
- Think twice before setting off fireworks. A spark that starts a wildfire isn't something to celebrate. Fireworks are prohibited on public lands, and other areas may have additional restrictions.
- Used cigarettes have been responsible for starting wildfires. If you're smoking, make sure you dispose of them properly. Never toss them on the ground.



- Hitting the road? Don't let chains or metal from your vehicle drag while driving. Secure them properly to avoid creating sparks that could start a wildfire.
- Looking for other activities to do today? We recommend [insert area or activity recommendations].
- It's getting smoky out there. For more information about air quality, go to [insert URL].
- Because of the current fire conditions, [insert restricted activities] are restricted. For more information on current restrictions in Montana, go to mtfireinfo.org.
- Do not fly your drones over or near the [insert active fire]. Drones get in the way of firefighters and their equipment. If you fly, they can't! For more information on fire restrictions, go to mtfireinfo.org.

Social Media Content Ideas

- Share information from state agencies like the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Department of Environmental Quality and appropriate land management agencies like the U.S. Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and your local county health department.
- Post a carousel of the area's top 5 or 10 things to do to escape the heat or smoke.
- Share posts from open local businesses and area attractions.
- Post a carousel about ways to be fire aware.
- Example 1:
 - Here are ways you can be fire aware!
 - Know how campfires, fireworks, cigarettes and vehicle chains start wildfires.
 - Give firefighters and equipment space. Keep your drones away from active fires.
 - Check current fire stages and activity restrictions at mtfireinfo.org.

Example 2:

All it takes is one spark to start a wildfire. Use these tips to help with fire prevention.

- Know how to safely light, maintain and extinguish your campfire. Never leave one unattended.
- Fireworks are prohibited on public lands. Check local restrictions to learn more. (include link)
- Throw away used cigarettes properly, not on the ground.
- Don't let chains or metal from your vehicle drag on the ground while driving.



Sample Social Media Graphics

[Download Images Here](#)

Sample Fire Aware Website Copy

Be Wildfire Wise

Before you spend time outside, know how to properly handle fires and prevent their spread. **Always check the area's current fire stage before heading out because activities could be restricted.** For more information, visit [include relevant page link — whether a DMO blog post on this, DMO travel updates page, or, if no relevant DMO pages, mtfireinfo.org].

Know Campfire Safety

Check the fire stage for campfire restrictions. Know how to safely light, maintain and extinguish your campfire. Drown, stir, drown some more, then feel. If it is too hot to touch, it is too hot to leave. Never leave a campfire unattended. For more information, visit [include relevant page link — whether a DMO blog post on this, DMO travel updates page, or, if no relevant DMO pages, mtfireinfo.org].

Check Fireworks Restrictions

Fireworks are prohibited on public lands. Check local restrictions to learn more. For more information, visit [include relevant page link — whether a DMO blog post on this, DMO travel updates page, or, if no relevant DMO pages, mtfireinfo.org].

Dispose Cigarettes Properly

Throw away used cigarettes properly, not on the ground. Check the fire stage for smoking area restrictions.

Maintain Your Vehicle and Secure Chains

Before you drive, make sure your vehicle is properly maintained. Low tire pressure, worn brakes, loose tow chains and metal parts could all cause sparks while driving. It's also important to stay away from dry grass or brush. The heat from mufflers and exhaust pipes can start a fire.

