

Proposal for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Branch of Wildland Fire to Initiate a Twitter, Flickr and Facebook Account

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I. Introduction

The Fire Communication and Education program for the BIA- Branch of Wildland Fire Management at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) proposes to create social media accounts for Twitter, Flickr and Facebook.

We are requesting use of this social media technology for the following reasons:

(a) NIFC External Affairs works in close association with the national fire and/or fire operations directors for seven agencies and organizations with oversight of wildland fire management. The level and scope at which we work makes External Affairs a key source of BIA- NIFC information on wildland fire topics. Twitter and other social media applications would be an important tool in assisting External Affairs to fulfill this responsibility.

(b) BIA-NIFC disseminates national information using email and fax technologies, mediums of communication which have inherent limitations. Social media can enable us to get *immediate* news and information to audiences across the country.

(c) BIA-NIFC works in a unique interagency setting. Many of our communication and public information partners already function in a fully-integrated social media environment. BIA-NIFC could use social media tools to enhance and maintain both communication abilities and relevance.

II. Summary of Target Audiences

We propose to use social media to communicate with the following audiences:

- Agency personal at the regional and local levels of fire management
- Tribal wildland fire management programs
- Key stakeholders and interest groups such as the Intertribal Timber Council and other tribal affiliations
- Incident management team personnel (who might otherwise be difficult to communicate with)
- Administratively determined personnel (BIA-NIFC supports over 7,000 workers annually)
- Interagency partners
- News media

III. Number and Position of Employees Needing Access to Twitter Account

1. Asst. Director Resource Protection
2. BIA-NIFC Fire Communication and Education Specialist

IV. Areas of Discussion

We would use social media applications to provide information to followers about these kinds of topics:

1. **Special Events.** Twitter would enable NIFC to inform followers of visits to NIFC by departmental officials, news conferences, and special on-base events, for example. A controlled broadcast or news feed would allow us to engage with our audiences to provide follow up information and gain a better understanding of what our audiences know of Indian Country. Flickr would allow Indian Country to post and share pictures with tribal programs and our interagency partners. Facebook would allow us to share immediate success stories about what is taking place in Indian Country fire management and engage with our audiences more transparently.
2. **Announcements of national decisions, policy changes, etc.** We propose to use Twitter to announce information such as success story announcements, website updates, changes in National Preparedness levels, or the declaration of an Emergency Support Function involving fire personnel under the National Response Framework. Twitter may be used to announce regionally significant events involving the wildland fire community. Flickr may be used to display photographs or videos from regionally significant events involving the wildland fire community.
3. **Incidents of national significance.** Some wildfires take on national significance when they involve fatalities, massive evacuations, or destruction of treasured landscapes or properties. NIFC agencies, like BIA-NIFC, can better position ourselves as sources of national information and perspective using the immediacy provided by Twitter. It may also be used to link to other wildland fire management programs such as InciWeb, which tweets updates for wildfires that have an Incident Management Organization assigned to manage large incidents. Flickr may be used to display photographs or videos from wildland incidents, or news involving the wildland fire community.
4. **Assisting field units with the spread of key information.** BIA-NIFC may use Twitter and Flickr capability to occasionally assist Regional Field offices with the dissemination of time-critical information, when they have no other avenues to accomplish that goal. An example of this would be announcing the availability of new fire application software updates.
5. **Monitoring of Information.** Often, key, time sensitive information is posted on Twitter as soon as notifications are made. The ability to monitor social media is an additional avenue to connect with the field's activities and our audiences concerns.

V. Guidelines

There are no social media guidelines approved for Indian Affairs (IA) at this time, therefore per DOI Policy; the following principles will be employed when using public-facing social media services in an official capacity within IA.

1. BIA-NIFC will not release any bureau related information that is not considered public information. The discussion of sensitive, proprietary, or classified information is strictly prohibited. This rule applies even in circumstances where password or other privacy controls are implemented.
2. All third-party social media Web sites will be linked directly back to the BIA-NIFC website located at www.bia.gov/nifc/.

3. When BIA-NIFC represents Indian Affairs in an official capacity, it is responsible for the content published on the social networking Web sites. BIA-NIFC is aware that content is considered in the public domain once it is posted, will be available for a long period of time, and can be published or discussed in the media.
4. BIA-NIFC will remain focused on our mission. If using social media tools to communicate with the public interferes with the primary duties of wildland fire management, we will end the use of social media.
5. We will honor and follow Indian Affairs and DOI Executive Branch conduct guidelines, such as the Appropriate Use of the Internet, Limited Personal Use of Government Equipment, and Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees.

VI. Plan for Content Approval

The Fire Director and Deputy Fire Director would ultimately have final approve of content for dissemination for all social media applications. Use of social media to release any sensitive information would be coordinated with Fire Management leadership and the Indian Affairs Public Affairs Office.

VII. Description of Value to BIA

Social media capability would benefit BIA- NIFC in several ways:

- It would enable us to rapidly notify followers of events, decisions, incidents of national significance, and announcements.
- The cultural and social relevance of social media would boost our credibility and capability to reach certain audiences.
- It would help us respond to immediate questions from reporters, editors and bloggers.
- Twitter would assist us in framing issues, providing perspective and explaining situations in ways that head off potential issues.

VIII. Risk and Mitigation of Risk

Risk 1: Release of incorrect, premature or unapproved information. We assess the risk of this happening as being low. All “tweets” originating from external affairs would be approved prior to release will be approved through the Fire Director or the Deputy.

Risk 2: Sensitive or embarrassing information gaining an uncontrolled foothold on the internet (“going viral”). We assess the risk of this happening as low. All information originating from BIA-NIFC would be approved prior release through the Fire Director or his Deputy.

IX. Impacts of Denial

Denial of this proposal would not adversely impact the status quo, since we do not currently use social media applications. However, we see these applications as a natural extension of our developing web presence. Denial would prevent us from using a form of social media widely used by the news media, emergency responders and the general public. Denying a BIA-NIFC presence on social media applications ignores the time-critical nature of certain fire-related events, and it prevents us from using a communications technology millions of people are already using with great success.

X. Process for Social Media Approval

The processes for authorizing social media applications are still developing. At the request of the Indian Affairs Chief Information Officer (IA-CIO), BIA-NIFC will be the first entity within Indian Affairs to test social media applications. BIA-NIFC will partner with IA-OCIO to develop social media procedures and guidelines for the Bureau.

IA-OCIO recommends BIA-NIFC submit approval documentation to the IA-CIO who will work with the Indian Affairs Office of Public Affairs for authorization. This process will be assessed in the future and may change as other entities within the Bureau submit proposals for social media applications.

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