
SECTION VII

All the Words Fit to Print: New Fire Management Terminology

Reporters don't need to strip their writing of the fiery language that makes for great stories, but they should not sacrifice accuracy in their pursuit of exciting prose. Many terms commonly used to report the "facts" are explicit pejoratives (e.g. the term, "catastrophic wildfire") that are often wildly inaccurate for describing the actual behavior and effects of specific fires. Moreover, these words have become politicized terms with not-so-subtle ideological intentions for promoting fire policies that favor existing bureaucratic institutions and economic interests.

Reporters are therefore urged to replace the common "loaded" terms with some of the neutral or new terms offered below.

Loaded Terms	Neutral Terms	New Terms
Wildfires	Forest/Brush/Grassland Fires	Wildland Fires
Catastrophic	Stand-Replacing	High-Severity
Natural Disaster	Natural Disturbance	Ecological Stimulus
Escaped/Out-of-Control	Uncontained/Uncontrolled	Unconfined
Fighting Fire	Suppressing Fire	Managing Fire
Let Burn	Wildland Fire Use	Monitored Fire
Backfire/Burnout	Firing Operation	Backburn
Fire Dangers	Fire Conditions	Fire Environment
Firestorm/Conflagration/ Superfire/Megafire	Mass Fire	Large-Scale Severe Fire
Controlled Burning	Prescribed Burning	Light-Burning

There is an official glossary of wildland fire management terms at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/glossary/index.htm>.