



BLM Fire Interview Tips

First and foremost, nothing is off the record! The surest way to avoid being quoted about something you don't want on the public record is to avoid saying it.

Do not feel the need to engage in an interview just because a reporter catches you at your desk. It's ok to schedule the interview for later, allowing you time to fully prepare.

Prior to an interview, try to anticipate all the possible questions a reporter will ask. You should also ask ahead of time what topics they want to cover. Practice your answers in your head. Does what you're saying make sense? What will other people tell the reporter if asked the same question? Are there "holes" in the information you are providing?

If you are providing a camera interview, most of the time the reporter will have you ignore the camera and look at them when providing an answer. However, it is ok to clarify with the reporter where they want you prior to starting the interview.

Don't be annoyed if a reporter stops you and asks you to clarify a point. It's the best chance you have to be clear in your message.

Take your time to get it right! As long as the interview isn't live, it is ok for you to stop the interview and restart if you want to rephrase a sentence, or if you just don't like how you sounded the first time.

Don't be alarmed or annoyed if the reporter is taking notes as you talk. Many reporters want to capture the conversation the best they can. However, this is also a good reminder to be careful about what you say.

Stay away from language full of jargon and government acronyms! Most people, including the reporter, do not understand what you are talking about.

Kindness goes a long way. Treat the reporter with respect, even if it's not reciprocated. Maintain your professionalism!

Prior to providing an interview, know your subject! It is your job to make certain the reporter understands what you are talking about. It is also your job to make sure you understand what you are talking about. Do not try to answer questions you don't know the answer to.

If you don't know an answer to a question, say so. It is fully appropriate to tell a reporter that you do not know the answer to something and then offer to follow-up with them later.

Keep your personal life out of your interview. Occasionally, reporters will ask you what you think about the political climate, or where you stand on the subject of saving baby seals. Do not answer these questions. You are there to represent your agency, not provide your personal opinion on matters.

Tell the truth! Lies are trouble. If you are caught telling a lie, the media has two stories, instead of one.

Do not let a reporter form your words for you. If a reporter says something like, "Then, what you mean is..." pay attention! You are about to hear how you will be quoted, so fix mistakes when necessary.

Do not repeat hostile questions. For example:

- Reporter: "BLM fire leadership on this fire is ignoring key safety consideration. Couldn't this mean there are increased chances firefighters could be injured or die?"
- Wrong: "No, we are not ignoring key safety considerations and I do not think firefighters are going to be injured or die."
- Correct: "Safety of firefighters is our number one priority. BLM leadership has taken every possible measure to ensure firefighter safety remains at the forefront of every decision."

Don't give explicit details of extreme injuries or fatalities.

Don't assign liability. It is inappropriate to say whether something failed or someone else is to blame. Like criminal charges, those matters are better left to a formal investigation.

Fire specific interviews:

- Notify or work with the appropriate Public Affairs Officer or the local Public Affairs Office on media inquiries.
- Follow the proper protocols and chain of command for escorting media to the fireline.
- Ensure reporters and camera crew are wearing PPE when going to the fireline or hazardous sites. Note: They are responsible for providing their own PPE.
- Confirm the messages and talking points have been vetted by the lead Public Affairs Officer prior to providing an interview.