

Wildfire risk communication via news Media: balancing journalists' approaches and scientific credibility



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Effective exchange of reliable information between managers, practitioners policy makers, researchers and the public facilitates:

- Public risk awareness and acceptance
- Public engagement with risk reduction activities
- Appreciation of the positive role of fire (where relevant)
- Realisation of having to ‘live with some fire and smoke’



Medium	Audience	Audience reached
Scientific papers	Highly specialized audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research community • some science journalists • some scientific advisers 	100-1000's
Reports Policy briefs White papers Specialist magazines	Targeted specialist audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practitioners • policy makers • some academics • some science journalists • some scientific advisers 	>1000's (?)
TV, online and print media	Everyone engaging with news <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practitioners • policy makers • some academics • some science journalists • some scientific advisers 	1000's-millions

Reach of communications



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...BUT:

only “10% of academics in UK are willing and active in working with the media”

(Evans 2019, Academic Experts and The Media)



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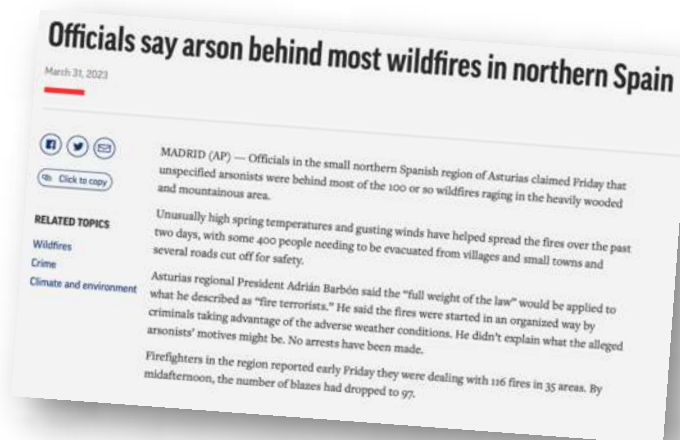
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- Lack of interest (‘not my role’)
- Perception of not having sufficient expertise
- Avoiding risk of misrepresentation and loss of credibility
- Lack of relevant media training

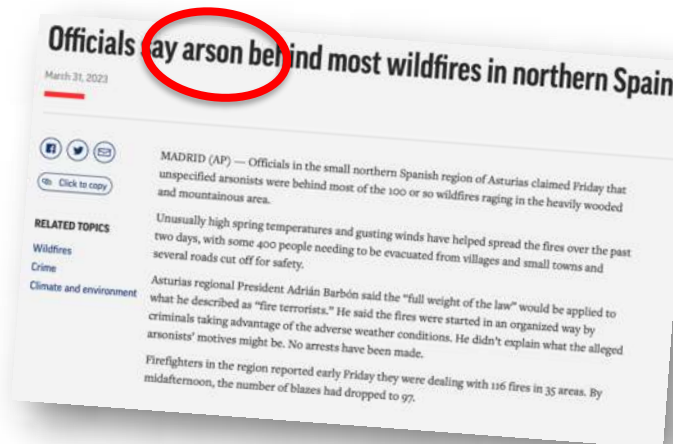


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- Controversial, unprecedented, catastrophic, emotive....
- Relevance to the individual reader (e.g. personalised stories)
- Very fast response (within hours or days if lucky)
- Clear and simple messages (e.g. who or what is to blame)



Our attempt to reduce misconceptions...

...quite good reach (>50,000 downloads)



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E.g. overall decline in
global area burned, but
important increases in
some forested regions



Heat recedes from wildfires fears

May 29, 2016, by Tim Radford



THE DAILY CALLER NEWS FOUNDATION

Study: Global Warming Isn't Causing More Wildfires



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Waldbrände werden kleiner

Forscher haben globale Daten über Waldbrände ausgewertet: Die von Bränden betroffenen Gebiete sind demnach geschrumpft. Das Problem werde übertrieben.



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Forget The Amazon Hype, Fires Globally Have Declined 25% Since 2003 Thanks To Economic Growth

...sowohl über die ... geschrumpft.

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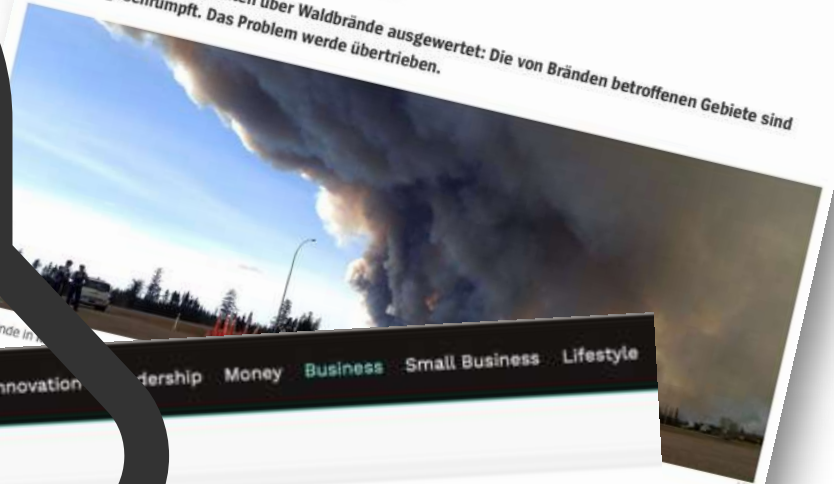
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 **Donald J. Trump** 
@realDonaldTrump 

There is no reason for these massive, deadly and costly forest fires in California except that forest management is so poor. Billions of dollars are given each year, with so many lives lost, all because of gross mismanagement of the forests. Remedy now, or no more Fed payments!

♥ 123K 9:08 AM - Nov 10, 2018

💬 131K people are talking about this



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No Donald Trump, we aren't going to have 'great climate', and poor forest management only plays minor role in wildfires

As the forest service, fire managers and academics have been crying out loud for years, money could be spent much more effectively is in fire preparedness and mitigation

Cristina Santin and Stefan H Doerr |

Sunday 18 November 2018 12:39 |



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Cristina Santin and Stefan H Doerr
Trump is right - poor forest management is to blame for wildfires



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Personal experiences: radio and TV interviews

- Often very **little time to prepare**
- May be recorded or live and you may not look your best ☹️
- You may not see the presenter (black screen)
- You may **not get the questions you expected!**
- ...or are **saying what you had intended**
- If not live, **your quotes may be used out of context**
- **Have a few key messages prepared to draw on**



- Working with journalists **can be very stressful, but also rewarding**
- Potentially **much greater impact** than any of your publications
- **Be ready for gross simplification** and messages to be ‘not quite right’
- Dissemination to the public is also our duty (our personal view)
- **Better you than a non-expert!**

Useful links and training: **Expertfile**

<https://expertfile.com/resources/academic-expertsand-the-media-in-the-uk>

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Thank you