**6 Minutes**

**for Media**

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Niobrara Valley Preserve, Nebraska

March 8-22, 2014

**Keep Focus on Your Key Messages**

Always remember that your objective is to give the reporter a story based on what *you* want to say. You are in control of the interview, and it will benefit you greatly to know what you want to say and how you want to say it.

These suggestions will help:

* For the first question, step back and provide the context. Be concise and say your most important message (often this will focus on safety).
* Keep your cool!
* Avoid technical terms and acronyms and keep your answers simple.
* Stick to your main points, even if it means repeating yourself.
* Know when to be quiet. Dead air is the reporter’s problem.
* Never, ever say: “no comment.” If you can’t answer a question, say why.
* Never speak OFF THE RECORD. Expect that anything you say could appear in print.
* Always tell the truth.
* Don’t speculate. If you don’t know the answer, say so, and offer to find someone else who does know (make sure you actually follow up). In a live interview, bridge back to your main points.
* Don’t answer hypothetical questions.
* Don’t speak on behalf of anyone else. Let other people, organizations, and agencies speak for themselves.
* Clarify incorrect statements made by the reporter.
* Screw up? Say “Let me start again,” then say what you need to say.
* Avoid yes/no answers. Use the opportunity to bridge back to your main points.
* When asked “Do you have anything else you would like to say?” or “Anything else?” say you do, then use “The most important thing to remember is ­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” to really draw attention to your priority message(s).
* **Key Messages for the 2014 Niobrara Valley Preserve TREX:**

1. Safety is paramount.
2. Fire training is necessary and important.
3. Like rain, fire is critical in the Great Plains.
4. Pay now, or pay later.
5. **The next generation of firefighters, managers and conservationists is taking fire leadership seriously. Fifty members of the Student Association for Fire Ecology (S.A.F.E.) from five universities are spending their spring breaks learning at the Niobrara Valley Preserve.** **S.A.F.E. is a college club that supports students studying fire ecology. These students will learn how to use equipment, ignite fires, and plan controlled burns. They will also study the effects of fire on grasslands by visiting controlled burn sites completed over the last few years.**
6. **Building on past successes and lessons learned, the training exchanges have grown every year, attracting more partners and participants from around the U.S. and the world. People who have met in Nebraska have gone on to host training events in South Africa and Spain.**
7. Wildfire effects, such as erosion and large numbers of dead tree skeletons standing across the landscape, are dramatic reminders of what the combination of unchecked, excessive fuel loads and drought will produce.

\*\*\*Portions of the information contained in this document were adapted from *A Guide to Successful Media Interviews* (NIFC, 2009), located at: <http://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/Background/NIFC-MediaInterviewGuide2009-Landscape.pdf>.