



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

Wildfire Awareness Day

Aims and objectives

- To raise people's awareness of wildfires and of the impact they can have on the environment.
- To give people a better understanding of what can be lost in a wildfire, and why it is important to everyone that we prevent them.
- To enable people to see at close quarters some of the native species that can be affected by wildfire.
- To provide an opportunity for the Service to interact with the community.

The objective of the day is to invite community members, land managers and rural organisations to exhibit at a public event in order that members of the public will gain a better idea of the flora and fauna in their local rural environment and the activities performed to maintain the habitat. They are also an excellent opportunity to promote Firewise in a high risk community. In attracting members of the community to the event they will have the opportunity to acquire more in depth knowledge of the places vulnerable to wildfire and take more interest in the ownership of them.

Initial planning

With an event to be held ideally between the end of March and the middle of April to coincide with the time of potentially greatest fire risk, planning should start before the beginning of the New Year in order to secure people and resources necessary.

The success of the day is largely dependent on the number of visitors attending. Maximising throughput of visitors can be achieved by carefully choosing the date on which to hold the event and also where to hold the event.

By coinciding the day with other well established events in the local area such as a Village / Town open day or fair, you will naturally have a captive audience. This is however not always possible, so consideration should be made towards:

- a) Carrying out an extensive advertising campaign and
- b) Holding the event in a location where the public naturally gather on a daily / weekly basis.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

Fire and Rescue Services with a wildfire risk will have many ideal locations to hold such an event. These may be secured by approaching the land managers of these places such as Natural England or the National Trust.

Fire and Rescue Services may decide that a strategically placed Fire Station is the best option as it is a local attraction in itself and the appliance bay provides suitable shelter in inclement weather. If this is the case an accurate calculation of floor area and footprint required by each exhibitor needs to be made to ensure everything fits where intended on the day.

A H&S risk assessment should be carried out before the event in order to identify any hazards. Ensure this is done in plenty of time so you will have time to carry out any mitigation necessary before the day. Don't forget if you do have animals at the event you will need to have hand washing facilities with appropriate disinfectant available. Guidelines can be obtained from [DEFRA](#) (see details below).

Planning Timeline

Start by	Complete by	Activity
Nov	Dec	Plan a date for your event and check with local town and service diaries
Dec	Jan	Decide on venue and book if necessary. Book exhibitors and resources. Ensure Service planner / diary is updated if required
Jan	Feb	Send letters to schools. Design posters & send to publicity for approval. Carry out risk assessment. Produce evaluation sheet.
Feb	Mar	Print posters and display around local area. Book school visits
Mar	Apr	Carry out school visits. Confirm attendance of exhibitors and other FRS resources. Send press release to papers & carry out radio interviews.
On the day		Collect resources & final preparation

School visits

Before carrying out school visits to promote the event (and general wildfire awareness), FRS should seek appropriate permissions from the schools and book the necessary time to speak to the children. To this end, an approach to the head of each school, via a suitably worded letter, would be the most appropriate way. These letters need to be sent at the latest by January / February prior to the event as schools will plan their activities weeks in advance and may not be able to fit it in at short notice.

Schools are usually very receptive to Fire Service visits and welcome the input provided. By interacting with the younger age groups FRS will hopefully encourage them to mature with an attitude conducive to protecting their rural environment. The visit also forms a platform from which to advertise the event.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

A PowerPoint presentation is a useful aid to assist with the visit and should be tailored to the specific needs of each FRS. General principles to follow when producing this presentation include:

- Keep it simple and to the point
- Don't use too much text
- Use large font
- Use plenty of pictures

The presentation can usually be incorporated in the morning assembly and should be kept to around 20 minutes. Don't forget children get bored easily!

Advertising

Remember when placing any adverts to comply with your FRS publicity requirements. Most local papers will advertise the event for free with a picture and small write up on the reasons for holding it. Bear in mind that some publications may need notification weeks in advance so do your research and set a deadline.

If a poster is produced to promote the day it may need to be in the approved FRS format. An example poster is provided and can be adapted for each individual's needs as required.

Local Radio stations may be happy to promote Fire Station events via personal interviews which they will broadcast periodically before and during the event.

Exhibitors and resources

The choice of exhibitors should reflect the organisations involved in the management of rural areas within the host County. These may include, for example, the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England and the RSPB. There may also be conservation groups that are happy to bring live animals to the event to enable people to see wildlife at first hand or reptiles involved in relocation programs.

You may wish to involve other rural organisations, farms, and woodland businesses that have something to offer in way of an attraction for visitors. It should be stressed however that bringing farm animals to the event from different sources requires a license from DEFRA under the Animal Health Act 1981 and The Animal Gatherings Order 2010. Beware, there are strict guidelines to be followed in the movement of farm animals and there are cost implications in gaining a license which can take around 8 weeks to process. Advice can be sort from DEFRA.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

A list of suggested exhibitors are provided.

When planning and booking your exhibitors consider what appliances from your FRS that may enhance the event and book them. Special (off road) appliances such as Unimogs or Landrovers are a valuable addition to the day.

There may not be an available budget for an event such as this, so acquiring resources sometimes needs a little goodwill on behalf of the suppliers.

Food and refreshments for visitors can be arranged by booking a mobile catering unit and ice cream van to attend the event. Contact them early as they are some sometimes booked a long way ahead. These businesses sometimes offer a percentage of takings at the end of the day which can help with any expenses incurred or as a donation to the Fire Service Charity. Check conditions with them before booking.

You may wish to supply food and drink for your exhibitors as this helps maintain good relationships and may secure their attendance at future events. This may be supplied by the mobile catering unit instead of a percentage of takings but needs to be agreed in advance. A ticket system may ensure meals are only supplied to the right people and ensures that they also receive the correct quantity of items. If you wish to do food and drinks yourself for visitors and exhibitors, it is worth noting that there are regulations regarding the selling of food to members of the public unless you are catering on a donations rather than a fixed price basis.

Any resources for the day such as tables and chairs can sometimes be loaned from catering companies. Schools may also be able to help. A dozen or so straw bales make good seating, give a rustic feel to the day and can usually be supplied on loan from a local farm.

The day

Provided everything has been planned correctly the day should virtually run itself. However as your only contact with exhibitors until now may have just been over the phone or by email, now is a good time to talk to them and discuss how the day is going and get some input and suggestions from them face to face.

They may have questions they want to ask and this is an opportunity to discuss access points and what we require in the way of tracks suitable for Service vehicles. It may be worth asking them if they have a fire plan and maybe plan a date to talk through it in more detail and provide any advice necessary. Any information gained regarding their site will be valuable to the FRS in the event of a wildfire.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

As well as exhibitors now is the time to interact with the visitors, make them welcome and their visit enjoyable. The main purpose of the event is to prevent wildfires so staff need to be proactive handing out leaflets and evaluation forms, make themselves available to answer questions and generally assist in creating an interesting day out for them whilst maintaining a professional image.

Photos are a useful addition to promoting your future events and can be incorporated into any report required. There may be an amateur photographer on station or a friend willing to take on this role. A good photo can capture the atmosphere of the day and be used in future advertising.

Post event

It is very important to provide a follow up letter of appreciation to individual organisations after the event to maintain a good working relationship and hopefully secure their continued support in the future.

Collate all the best photos and invite exhibitors to see them whilst taking the opportunity to build on your relationship with them. Some of these photos can also be sent to local papers along with a press release promoting the day. It is important to do this, although the day is over, as it creates a talking point for those that visited and prompts others to visit next year if they missed it.

Evaluation forms are an important means for visitors to provide feedback and should be used to judge the success of your day. Not everyone will have completed one but whatever the return it provides a valuable insight into the usefulness of the event. The success of the event is very difficult to measure in terms of reducing wildfires as there are so many variables affecting the occurrence of these. However educating people in outdoor fire safety and the importance of it, can only have a positive effect in reducing future wildfires.

Hopefully in the eyes of the public, that area of charred undergrowth is not now just a patch of burnt grass but a destroyed habitat vitally important to global biodiversity.

A basic example of an evaluation form is included in this guide. This could be adapted to incorporate more generic details such as age, ethnicity, gender etc. if appropriate.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

Example Promotional Poster



This can be inserted into a template containing the host FRS insignia and contact details, along with appropriate event details – or just used for ideas.



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

Potential Exhibitors

Exhibitors will in many cases be specific to the locality / FRS. The following examples can however be used as a guide to the type of exhibitors that may be interested in supporting such an event. Contacting each organisations head office may provide you with contacts local to your area.

- Forestry Commission
- National Trust
- RSPB
- Natural England
- GPM Ecology
- Hedgerows for dormice
- Bush craft centres
- Borough and District Councils / Rangers
- Amphibian and Reptile Group
- Wildlife Trusts
- Environment Agency
- Coppice workers
- Animal Sanctuaries
- Survival centres
- Bird of Prey Centres
- Farms



Wildfire Awareness Day Planning

Evaluation Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to let us know what you felt about our wildfire awareness event. Please rate every question below from 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 the best scores for each question.

Did you learn anything about how wildfire affects the environment?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Has the day made you more aware of the dangers of wildfire and how to help prevent them?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Was there enough information available?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Was the information useful?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Did you enjoy the day?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Would you come to the event again and recommend it to your friends?									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Please provide any additional feedback that you have about the day below									
Comments:									