



MEDIA ACCESS AT DISASTER SITES

NEW LEGISLATION

House Bill 4087 allows credentialed news media unescorted access to wildfires and other natural disaster areas that are closed to the public. The bill does not apply to private property, federal land, tribal land, or property owned by educational institutions such as school districts, charter schools, colleges, and universities. Media outlets and journalists assume liability when accessing the scene of natural disasters.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONDERS

Incident commanders or their delegates:

- Can grant unescorted access to disaster scenes to media with credentials showing they have completed training.
- Have the authority to deny access under certain circumstances.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR NEWS MEDIA

Media representatives must:

- Complete the required safety training to receive credentials and update them annually.
- Assume their own risk and be responsible for their disaster-specific Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

WHEN TO DENY ACCESS

Incident commanders should use their best judgment to determine whether granting unescorted media access could interfere with the safety of response personnel, effective emergency response, or the integrity of an investigation. The likelihood of interference must be balanced with the critical need for media to keep the public informed.

Access may be denied:

- Where heavy equipment or aircraft are used to avoid injuries or death and prevent further damage.
- To avoid the destruction of evidence needed to determine a wildfire's cause and origin point.
- To media representatives who aren't carrying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) appropriate for the incident.

Additionally, if drones, personal or commercial aircraft use could endanger response personnel and limit operations, those aircraft will be restricted.

DO:

- Ask for credentials. It may be in the form of a card, phone-accessible image, or file. A list of credentialed media is available at the [Disaster Access for News Media \(HB4087\) webpage](#).
- Check to see if media representatives have parking placards in their vehicles.
- Work with your agency communications team and incident public information officers to help facilitate all news media requests. They can help arrange escorts for media who don't have credentials.

DON'T:

- Deny access based on concerns about the safety of media representatives.
- Allow media to use training credentials that belong to someone else. Credentials are not transferrable.
- Allow credentialed media to act as escorts for uncredentialed media or members of the public.
- Allow media parking or vehicles to interfere with emergency response vehicles.
- Allow media interviews or interactions with personnel to impede emergency operations.

LIST OF REQUIRED ALL-HAZARDS PPE:

- High visibility safety vest.
- Long pants.
- Enclosed shoes or boots.
- Hard hat.
- N95 mask or respirator or dust mask (dust or smoke).

REQUIRED WILDLAND FIRE GEAR

- Wildland fire boots: leather, lace up, at least 8 inches high (measuring from heel to the top of the boot), and melt-resistant lug soles. Not steel toe.
- Helmet with a chinstrap.
- Goggles or safety glasses.
- Ear plugs or another type of hearing protection.
- NFPA-compliant (1977) long-sleeved, flame-resistant shirt.
- NFPA-compliant (1977) flame-resistant pants.
- Leather, or leather-and-flame-resistant, gloves.
- A fire shelter under certain circumstances.
- Wear clothes made of natural fibers such as cotton, wool, or hemp.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Disaster Access for News Media (HB4087) webpage: bit.ly/HB4087

Agency Public Information Contacts: wildfire.oregon.gov/Documents/WildfireContacts.pdf