

# SEJ Webinar: Wildfire and the New Extremes — A Journalist Convening

2.26.25

Discussion Notes and Resources

## Moderators

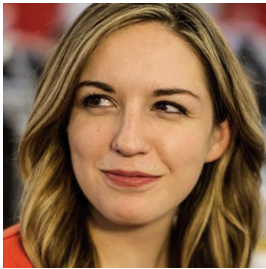


**Caleigh Wells**, Vice President of Programs, SEJ; Journalist, APM's  
Marketplace



**Molly Peterson**, Board Secretary, SEJ; Staff Writer, Public Health Watch

## Subject matter experts



**Colleen Hagerty**, LA-based Disaster Journalist and Author, "My World's on Fire"



**Kate Maxwell**, Creator, Local News Go Bag



**Kylie Mohr**, Montana-based Wildfire Journalist



**Adam Rose**, Secretary, Los Angeles Press Club



**Erin Stone**, Climate Emergency Reporter, LAist

## Resources

SEJ has long had one site collecting years of tipsheets and resources for wildfire:

[Topics on the Beat: Wildfire](#)

We've set a goal at SEJ to figure out how to support the growing number of journalists who cover wildfires; please help us by taking this survey:

[A Survey for Journalists about the Event](#)

What follows are notes from our gathering, including resources and topics in the mix.

## Legal & Physical Access Issues

Adam Rose shared resources from the Los Angeles Press Club:

[Disaster Coverage Tips in California](#)

[Legal Hotlines](#)

More about [California Penal Code 409.7\(a\)](#), which identifies who qualifies as a journalist and what rights/protections journalists have when reporting (even without credentials)!

[Index Newspapers LLC v. City of Portland](#), an active case seeking to protect journalists from being targeted and attacked by law enforcement

"The National Interagency Fire Center has a great page for the media, including [info on the minimum requirements](#) for visiting the fireline and prescribed burns." – *Ashley Braun*

"Empathy and a little charm go a long long way!" – *Erin Stone*

"Check in at an incident command center." – *Jurgen Hess*

## Environmental Exposures

We discussed being prepared for what you're heading into.

[Extreme weather 101](#) (Grist)

CalFire [has training opportunities](#) for journalists. – *MJ, Francisco Martinezcuello*

The [Local News Go bag](#) has a good framework for thinking about the needs you might have.

"I also carry a first aid kit in my car at all times...Never forget snacks and extra water!" – *Erin Stone*

"Tear gas, CS gas, pepper spray after a clean shave is spicy." – *Francisco Martinezcuello*

"I have worked for 7 years with a veteran arson investigator from the ATF. He wears separate clothes and removes them before entering his car, he has a separate washer dryer for the clothes. His colleagues who were not cautious did not live long. [Here is an article](#) about the risks of toxic ash and debris." – *Ralph Bloemers*

"Nomex fire clothes, leather shoes, leather gloves" – *Jurgen Hess*

"Make sure to remove clothing and footwear before entering your home upon returning from the scene. They could be covered with toxic materials from the ash that you don't want to carry into your living space." – *Paula Dobbyn*

## Gear Recommendations

A lot of preparedness checklists flew around. They include a Wildfire Coverage Checklist from the [National Press Photographers Association](#) (and [SEJ's photog-specific recs](#) as well).

"N95 is fairly limited coverage. Also note that most masks do not protect against volatile gasses. Best to go for a NIOSH mask, like painters use. [Here is an example.](#)" – *Ralph Bloemers*

"The best I've seen is about \$300+ total for fire retardant Nomex/Tecasafe pants and shirt, which I just purchased because I'm heading out for a magazine story covering prescribed fire and I'm including that in expenses." – *Ashley Braun*

“The PFAS is usually in stain or weather resistant gear. And yes, you have to not wear any synthetics if you are going to be near fire, like a synthetic waistband in your underwear can get really hot and melt to your body. So that is why many wildland firefighters go without 😊.” — *Ralph Bloemers*

“Complicating matters more is that apparently some Nomex has PFAS and, as you point out, some doesn’t, depending on the coating.” — *Ethan Baron, who shared [this link](#)*

## Trauma and How To Cover It

Erin Stone emphasized the importance of telling interview subjects after a fire “you’re in charge, you’re in control.”

The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, a project at Columbia University, offers guides, subject-specific resources (including one for disaster), and various tipsheets:

[Guide to Trauma-Informed Reporting](#)

[On Disaster](#)

[Interviewing in the Aftermath of Trauma](#)

## Changing Nature of Wildfire

We talked about the changing nature of risk. [Wildfires are year-round](#), as a previous SEJ publication has noted.

Kylie shared First Street, a privately held modeling company, mentioned for its [Wildfire Risk Mapping](#).

Misinformation is an emerging concern.

“[Here’s a 2022 paper](#) on countering wildfire misinformation and the supplemental information (you have to download it separately) has a very helpful table that outlines specific misinformation narratives around wildfire.” — *Ashley Braun*

“Something else to be thinking about right now is [the way the federal layoffs are going to be affecting this year’s wildfire season](#), which has obviously already started. Great place to look for local angles — prescribed fires are going to get hampered, wildland firefighter hirings and trainings are getting held up, so much all across the country.” — *Ashley Braun*

## Panelist Resources

Adam Rose

My personal email is [adjoro@gmail.com](mailto:adjoro@gmail.com) for anyone here. For public sharing online you can post [pressrights@lapressclub.org](mailto:pressrights@lapressclub.org) (like if someone complains on social media about being kept out, that's one I monitor).

Colleen Hagerty, disaster journalist:

[My World's On Fire](#) (newsletter)

Erin Stone, LAist climate emergency reporter:

Find her at [estone@scpr.org](mailto:estone@scpr.org).

Kate Maxwell, Local Reporter, Go Bag:

Find her [at the project](#).

Kylie Mohr, High Country News:

Find her at [her website](#).

**Help us organize resources to support you – [Take the survey!](#)**