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The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the **Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)**.

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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NIFC Statement on Hobby Drones at Wildfires

The [National Interagency Fire Center \(NIFC\)](#) released a statement last week about [Unmanned Aircraft Systems \(UAS\)](#) (PDF, 51.6 Kb), also known as drones, and their safety at wildfire scenes. NIFC states there have been at least three reports of UASs being flown in or near a restricted airspace near wildfires this year so far.

Authorities often put Temporary Flight Restrictions around wildfire areas. With the exception of those directly working on suppression operations, most aircraft must obtain permission from the fire manager before entering that airspace. This includes both manned and unmanned aircraft. If caught, the pilot can face criminal and civil penalties.

Of most concern is the possibility of a midair collision with airtankers, helicopters, and other aircraft working the scene of the wildfire which could result in the serious injury or death of pilots and firefighters. If a UAS is seen near a wildfire, the fire manager could halt air operations, as nearly happened in [Northern California](#).

Hobbyists drone use appears to be rising around fire and emergency scenes, as a quick YouTube search shows. The trend raises many safety and privacy concerns. Federal laws are currently unclear on hobby use, but some agencies have [banned them in areas they manage](#). Agencies and departments concerned about drone use should discuss the matter with law enforcement and legal advisors.

(Source: [NIFC](#))

Feds Propose Rule Changes for Bakken Trains

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are seeking comments on [proposed changes to improve safe rail transportation of flammable materials](#), specifically ethanol and crude oil. This is in response to the Bakken crude oil accidents and concerns.

Two different proposed rules appear in Federal Register awaiting comments: [Enhanced Tank Car Standards and Operational Controls for High-Hazard Flammable Trains](#) and [Oil Spill Response Plans for High-Hazard Flammable Trains](#).

Proposed changes include:

- Enhancing tank car standards and phasing out older DOT 111 tank cars;

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- Imposing maximum rail speed restrictions and enhanced braking;
- Ensuring proper classification of mined gases and liquids;
- Expanding comprehensive oil spill response plans to include high-hazard flammability trains;
- Requiring carriers to do rail routing risk assessments.

Comments on these proposed changes are due no later than September 30th, 2014.

(Source: [U.S. DOT](#))

New Toolkit Available: Texting for Public Health

For public health departments looking for ways to communicate with hard to reach populations and improve emergency notification, this new free toolkit can help. [Texting for Public Health](#), produced by the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWCPHP), explains the components needed for developing a texting program in-house for your agency.

Text messaging helps bridge communications gaps created by mass media and technology, allowing you to send timely, personalized messages to thousands of community members. This interactive toolkit includes activities, templates, videos, and other resources to assist users with all levels of experience.

Topics include conducting audience research, enrolling subscribers, marketing the new program, legal and security concerns, and crafting messages. You'll also learn to navigate legal and security issues, choose a platform, create a budget, and evaluate your program.

(Source: [NWCPHP](#))

Social Media in Emergency Management

Social media provides real-time situational awareness to first responders, giving them a better grasp of exactly what they may be walking into. When used together with traditional media sources, radios, dispatch systems, traffic cameras, and other sources, social media helps provide a distinct window into an event or incident.

A new report by the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate focuses on social media's use during emergencies. [Using Social Media for Enhanced Situational Awareness and Decision Support](#) (PDF, 1 Mb) describes how best to identify, collect, verify, and contextualize information gathered using social media to make it more actionable for use in decision-making and response.

The Science and Technology Directorate addresses some of the problems listed in the 2013 publication [Lessons Learned: Social Media and Hurricane Sandy](#) (PDF, 4.6 Mb), such as a lack of integration of social media data with incident command, inability to validate data, and difficulty locating and sharing information and resources. Other issues in the report include:

- Challenges related to volume and access to information;
- Data management considerations;
- Security, privacy, and legal challenges;
- Complications when using third-party platforms.

(Source: [FirstResponder.gov](#))

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