
CAL FIRE MEDIA

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Incident Information Line:
(916) 618-3195
Media Line: (559) 635-8206

RELEASE DATE: September 16, 2020
10:00 a.m.

WEST CASTLE ZONE / EAST CASTLE ZONE SQF COMPLEX

Current Issues with Media, California Penal Code 409.5

Porterville – The Tulare County Sheriff, CAL FIRE, USDA Forest Service and National Park Service appreciate the vast majority of media partners who have cooperated with deputies and fire personnel and acted responsibly during this fire incident. It has come to our attention that a few members of the media have been impeding the progress of the firefighting effort and going on to private property without permission of the property owner. This activity cannot and will not be tolerated. Action will be taken if it persists.

We have been professional in our cooperation of providing access to areas and we expect the same level of professionalism and adherence to the rules from our media partners. State law (Penal Code section 409.5, please review [here](#)) grants the right of duly authorized members of the media to enter evacuated areas. It is widely understood that media personnel assume the risks involved when entering a closed area, and they cannot accept that liability on behalf of others. As an example, media cannot enter crime scenes, National Forest System lands under a Forest or Regional Order closing forest trails, roads or areas, or onto private property without prior permission. Nor can they impede the firefighting efforts of any fire incident.

It is our desire to help our media partners get the information they need to share with the public, however we will not tolerate blatant disregard for firefighter safety. The first responders appreciate those members of the media who adhere to the rules, and we know that there are only a small percentage of media personnel who are unaware of or disregard the rules and laws.

We ask that you share this information with your media partners. It is our desire to allow news organizations to share information without placing the first responders and the public in unnecessary danger.

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