



# COMMUNITY LIAISON PROGRAMS

## What They Are and How They Work

### Quick Guide - 2014 Issue 1

**Community Liaison Programs** (CLPs) are formal arrangements between communities and wildland fire management agencies. They provide interactive communication among communities, fire management agencies, and Incident Management Teams (IMTs) about what values are at-risk and how wildfires are managed. They provide fire managers with valuable local knowledge.

People who are involved in successful Community Liaison Programs described the following as important keys to success.

### How to Implement a Successful Community Liaison Program

- Establish and use the Community Liaison Program before a wildfire threatens. The program serves many agency-community collaboration purposes besides wildfire.
- Involve people who can “speak for” their neighbors or the agencies because they are well connected within the informal social networks and are trusted and reliable.
- Involve people who work well together and are effective collaborators.
- Create single points-of-contact between community liaisons and the agency and incident management teams.
- Use the informal communication networks and established traditional and social media used by the community rather than creating new ones.
- Organize formal areas of responsibility and communication channels.
- Two-way communication is essential. Communication is most effective when it is a conversation among equals rather than a “briefing.”
- Develop and share a common overall goal for management of the wildfire.
- Establish and maintain interpersonal trust by sharing reliable and useful information, listening, and following through on commitments.
- Learn about the incident command system and how it works. Know who does what on an incident management team.
- Agency and Incident Management Team personnel need to learn about the communities, formal and informal leaders, and residents’ needs, perceptions, and values-at-risk.
- Provide real-time, reliable, location-specific information about the fire that people can actually use.
- Communicate frequently. Communicate even when nothing has changed.
- Learn from each situation and use the learning to improve communications and collaboration.

### INVOLVEMENT - COMMUNICATION - TRUST - INFORMATION - KNOWLEDGE

When communities and fire managers understand each other’s concerns, managers are able to implement fire management strategies that respect local values-at-risk, livelihoods, and quality of life. Fire managers benefit from local knowledge of the area that helps them with fire strategies.