

LESSONS LEARNED

How Los Alamos National Laboratory
used social media to communicate
about the Las Conchas Fire



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Context

- Fire broke out on a Sunday afternoon
- EOC activated in Los Alamos (Lab property)
- Alternative JIC activated 50 minutes away in Santa Fe
 - **Jeff Berger** – spent time at JIC, EOC, working from home
 - **Nancy Ambrosiano** – served at JIC; veteran of Cerro Grande Fire of 2000

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Context

- No particular social media plan in place
- Improvised during weeklong emergency
- Few of our team members had been using social media for LANL
 - YouTube (3½ years)
 - iTunes (less than a year, tiny presence)
 - Twitter (1 year)
 - Flickr (less than a year)
 - LinkedIn (for recruiting only, less than a year)
 - Used Facebook after the fact for volunteer efforts

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Fundamental advice, lessons learned

- Not limited to social media: get more help sooner (within your org and outside – e.g., Sandia)
 - 24/7 staffing; logistics; burnout . . . balanced with
 - Need for continuity
 - Media monitoring, including Web sites
- Establish general protocol beforehand for help with photography and video (LANL has shooters in another group)

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Twitter

twitter Home Profile Messages Who To Follow LosAlamosNatLab

LosAlamosNationalLab
@LosAlamosNatLab Los Alamos, New Mexico
<http://www.lanl.gov>

Edit your profile →

Tweets Favorites Following Followers Lists

NASA JPL NASA JPL ↪ by LosAlamosNatLab
During a weekend flyby of Saturn moon Enceladus, @CassiniSaturn tasted H2O vapor plumes & took these images: bitly.com/qFMuPQ
4 hours ago

LosAlamosNatLab LosAlamosNationalLab
Also nearby: Jemez Pueblo - jemezpueblo.org - Jemez Springs - jemezsprings.org - and Santa Clara Pueblo - indianpueblo.org/19pueblos/sant...
1 Oct

LosAlamosNatLab LosAlamosNationalLab
...Also near Los Alamos--on the way there from Santa Fe--is the Pueblo of San Ildefonso: indianpueblo.org/19pueblos/sani...
1 Oct

LosAlamosNatLab LosAlamosNationalLab
...and see nearby Bandelier National Monument, damaged by Las Conchas Fire but worth a visit: go.usa.gov/8LC ...
1 Oct

LosAlamosNatLab LosAlamosNationalLab
Visit Prohban Science Museum, public window on the work of Los...

About @LosAlamosNatLab

881 Tweets 64 Following 2,189 Followers 165 Listed

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Brookhaven Lab delivers science-based solutions for ...

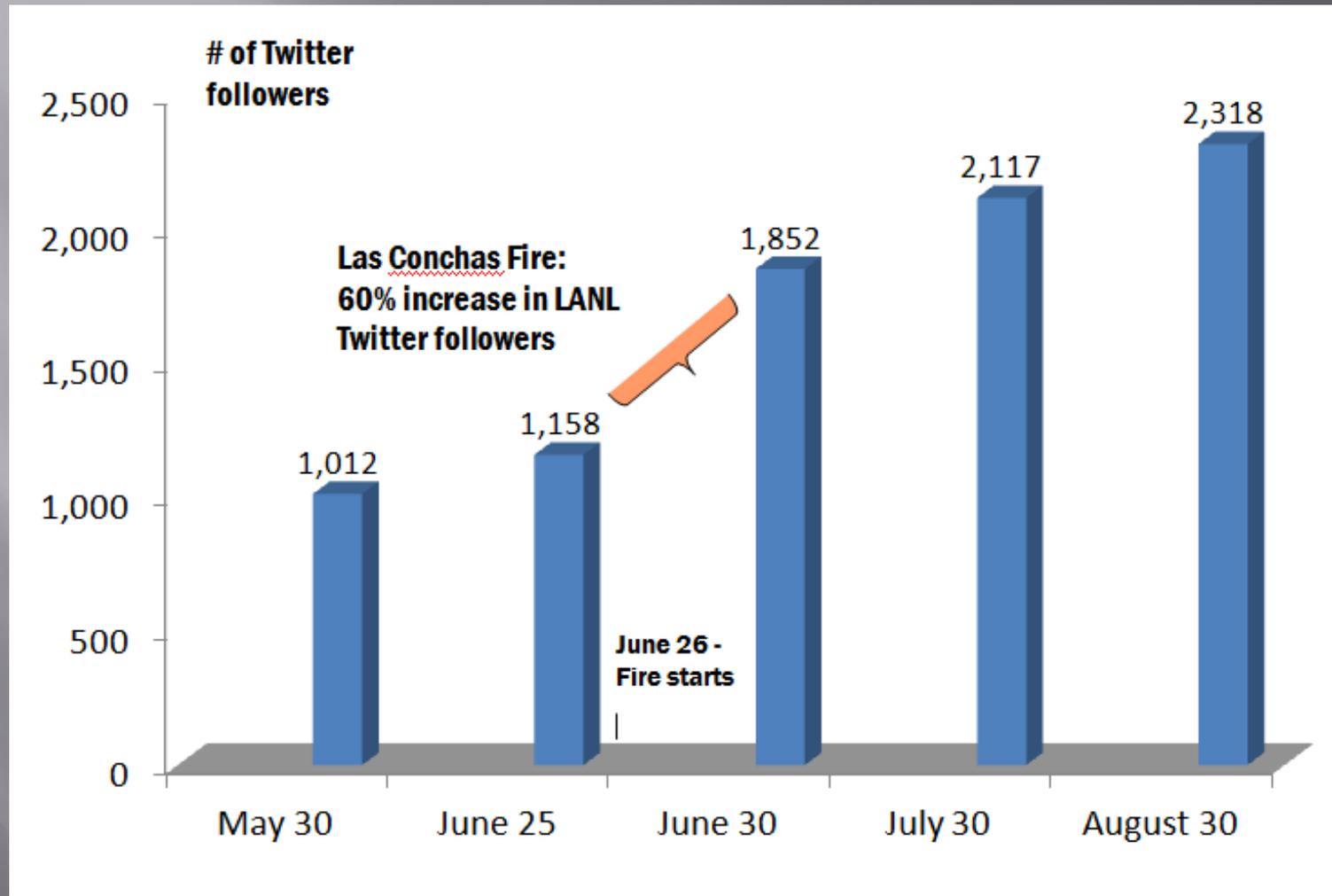
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Sanford Underground Lab at Homestake in South Da...

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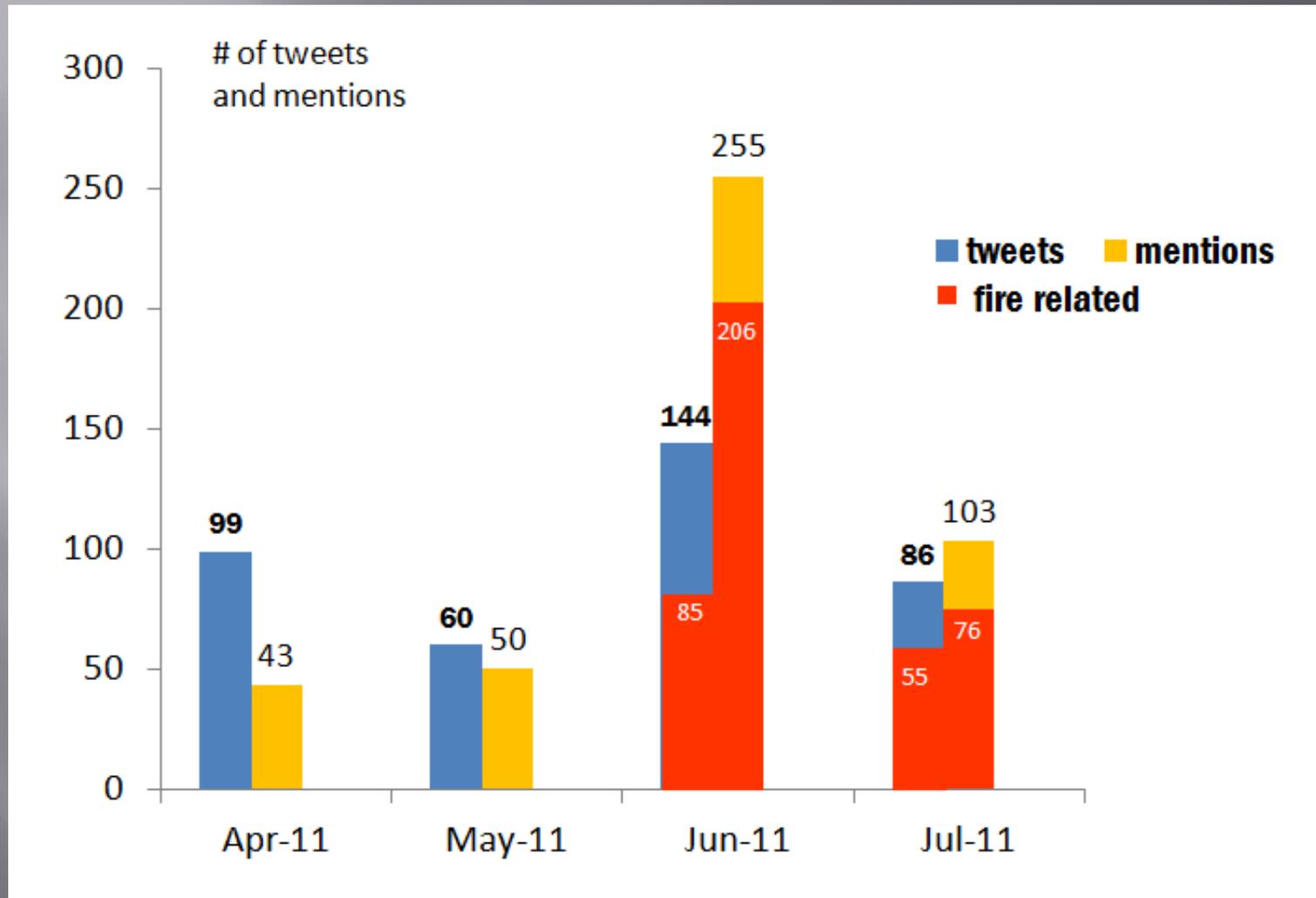
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Las Conchas Fire, social media *Twitter*



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Twitter



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Twitter

- Didn't ask permission
- Lived with some typos
- Experimented with corrections, clarifications, live tweeting
- Received positive feedback; flamed only once or twice
- Lots of retweets
- Many LANL employees who use social media personally served as informal "repeaters"

Las Conchas Fire, social media *Flickr*

- Began taking pictures in the JIC; not exciting but it's what we could provide that others couldn't



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr

Los Alamos National Laboratory - Sets



Las Conchas Fire

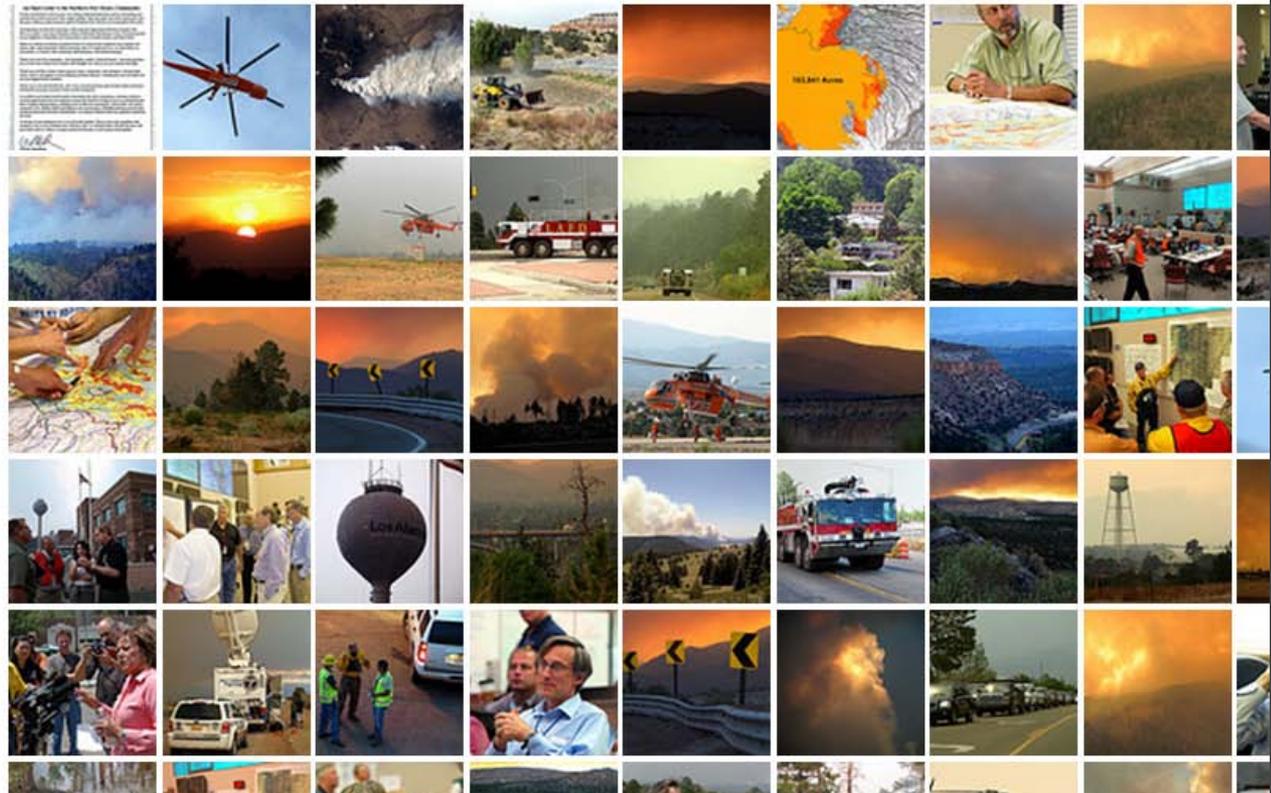
[Thumbnails](#) [Detail](#) [Comments](#)

Slideshow



129 photos | 33,630 views

items are from between 02 Oct 2009 & 19 Jul 2011.



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr

- In the 9 months before fire: 7,000 Flickr views
- Generated same number of views with our first 24 hours worth of “fire” pictures
- Cumulative total of 34,000 views (129 photos)
- Our Flickr popularity sank after the fire

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



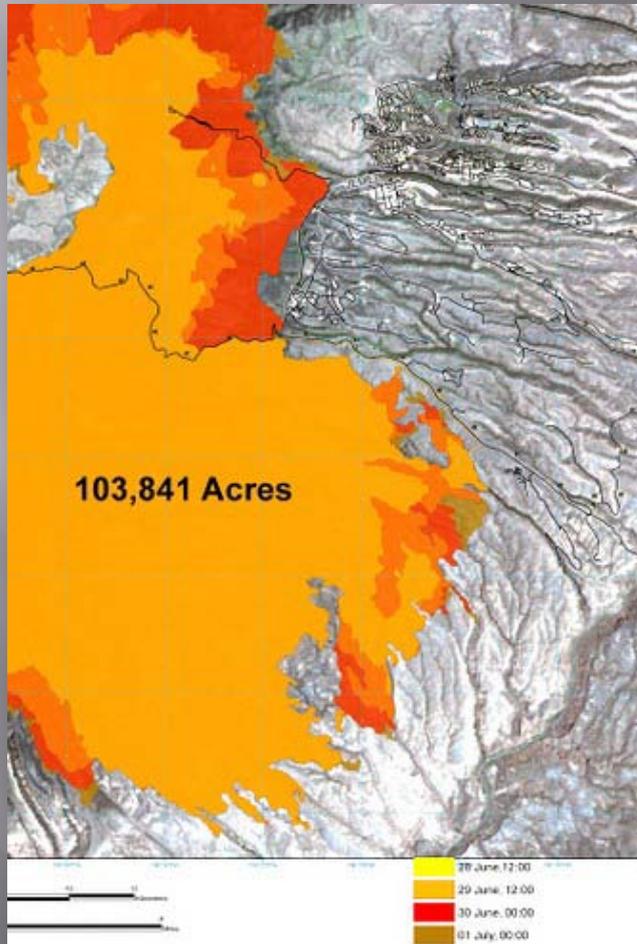
Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr



An Open Letter to the Northern New Mexico Community

For the second time in eleven years, Los Alamos National Laboratory and its surrounding communities have had to contend with a major wildfire. And once again, the entire country has seen the great resiliency and community spirit of Northern New Mexico as it responded to this crisis.

All indications are that the Laboratory will escape the major brunt of the Las Conchas Fire. However, others were not as fortunate and are confronted with damage or loss. Our hearts go out to our neighbors in Bandelier and communities, such as Cochiti, Jemez, and Santa Clara.

When Los Alamos residents evacuated on June 27, many of our employees and residents left homes, jobs, and community without knowing what we would return to—or when. When we came home, we found a safe community and Laboratory with minimal damage.

Thank you to the first responders—the firefighters, police, National Guard—who daily put their lives on the line to battle Las Conchas. Our thoughts are with you as you continue this fight.

Thank you to all the casinos, hotels, grocery stores, restaurants, and volunteers who provided meals, shelter, and support to those fighting and those fleeing—including the care and shelter for our four-legged family members.

Thank you to our elected officials, who were a constant presence and served as fierce advocates to bring the necessary resources to bear on this emergency.

In an effort to give back to our broader community, the Lab is launching a volunteer initiative, creating opportunities for our employees to provide food for firefighters that are still battling the blaze, support cleanup efforts, and plant trees in affected communities. The LANS, LLC parent companies (UC, Bechtel, B&W, and URS) are also announcing a \$50,000 challenge grant to help reimburse businesses for their contributions. Los Alamos National Bank has agreed to administer the fund.

In closing, let me emphasize that we're all in this together. These events unite neighbors and remind us why we love Northern New Mexico. Also, we will heal. Rain will fall, the trees will grow back, and we will be a stronger community because we have persevered together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie McMillan'.

Charlie McMillan

Director, Los Alamos National Laboratory and
President, Los Alamos National Security, LLC

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Picasa for Flickr; no stinkin' badges

Picasa 3: Free download from Go... x +

Picasa™ Search Photos

Crop Straighten Redeye
I'm Feeling Lucky Auto Contrast Auto Color

Free photo editing software from Google, now with name tags.

Retouch Text Edit in Picnik

Download Picasa 3.8
for Windows XP/Vista/7

...and go to [Picasa Web Albums](#) to share and explore photos.

Picasa is free photo editing software from Google that makes your pictures look great. Sharing your best photos with friends and family is as easy as pressing a button!

[Learn about Name tags in Picasa](#)  [Learn more about Picasa and Picasa Web Albums](#)
 [Watch a video introduction](#)

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Picasa enhancing Flickr image



Las Conchas Fire, social media

Flickr summary

- Phased approach to uploads:
 - Detailed captions and photo credits came later
- Comments on photos were helpful, gratifying
- A few photos generated dialogue
- Over time, we obtained photos from employees not associated with comms function
- Some news organizations used photos
- Other Flickr sites posted pix and links
- We used Flickr to find pix taken by others that we used in employee magazine

Las Conchas Fire, social media

YouTube



The screenshot shows a YouTube video player with a video of a preventive burn in a forest. The video title is "Preventive burn outside Los Alamos National Lab western boundary". The channel is "LosAlamosNatLabFire" with 1 video and a subscribe button. The video player shows a progress bar at 0:26 / 2:09 and a resolution of 480p. Below the video are buttons for Like, Add to, Share, and a flag icon. The video has 7,033 views, 9 likes, and 0 dislikes. It was uploaded by LosAlamosNatLabFire on Jun 29, 2011. The description reads: "The preventive fire outside the LANL western boundary burned very close to the Lab's Emergency Operations Center. Firefighters conducted the burn to remove fuel available to the Las Conchas Fire. The fire started on Sunday, June 26, 2011." A blue arrow points to the view count.

YouTube

Search Browse Movies

Preventive burn outside Los Alamos National Lab western boundary

LosAlamosNatLabFire 1 video Subscribe

0:26 / 2:09 480p

Like Add to Share

7,033

9 likes, 0 dislikes

As Seen On: The Lede

Uploaded by LosAlamosNatLabFire on Jun 29, 2011

The preventive fire outside the LANL western boundary burned very close to the Lab's Emergency Operations Center. Firefighters conducted the burn to remove fuel available to the Las Conchas Fire. The fire started on Sunday, June 26, 2011.

Las Conchas Fire, social media *Facebook*

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile page for "LANL Vecinos Volunteers Las Conchas Fire Recovery". The page header includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and navigation icons. The profile picture is the "Vecinos VOLUNTEERS" logo. The cover photo features a collage of images: a person at a table, a sign for a "LAS CONCHAS SEED BAIT DRIVE", and two groups of women. The page is set to "Public" and is categorized as a "Government Organization" in "Los Alamos, New Mexico". The "Wall" tab is selected, showing a "Write something..." text box. Below the text box is a post from the organization sharing a photo of the Bandelier National Monument. The left sidebar contains navigation links for Wall, Info, Friend Activity, and Photos, along with an "About" section describing the organization's mission and a "238 like this" count. The "Likes" section shows two entries for "Bandelier National Monument".

facebook

Search

LANL Vecinos Volunteers Las Conchas Fire Recovery Like

Government Organization · Los Alamos, New Mexico

Vecinos VOLUNTEERS

Wall

Info

Friend Activity

Photos

About

Helping volunteers connect with opportunities to serve the recovery efforts...

More

238 like this

Likes

Bandelier National Monument

Bandelier National Monument

LANL Vecinos Volunteers Las Conchas Fire Recovery shared Bandelier National Monument's photo.

Write something...

Share: Post Photo

Wall Photos

It's been almost 3 months that everything in Frijoles Canyon has had to be

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Integration, cross-promotion

- Our news releases included links to Flickr site and to back-burn video on YouTube
- We tweeted about
 - news releases
 - links to new Flickr photos
 - back-burn video on YouTube
 - volunteer Facebook page
- We posted on Flickr images of maps, ads, employee magazine coverage
- Others (e.g., Sen. Udall) tweeted about Flickr shots

Las Conchas Fire, social media *Integration--NYT*

HOME PAGE	TODAY'S PAPER	VIDEO	MOST POPULAR	TIMES TOPICS
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The New York Times
Monday, October 3, 2011

News

WORLD	U.S.	N.Y. / REGION	BUSINESS	TECHNOLOGY	SCIENCE	HEALTH	SP
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The Lede

Blogging the News

June 30, 2011, 3:46 PM

Wildfire Continues to Burn Near Nuclear Facility in New Mexico

By ELIZABETH A. HARRIS



Las Conchas Fire, social media *Integration--NYT*

By ELIZABETH A. HARRIS



Video of a "controlled burn" carried out on Wednesday near the western boundary of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. The laboratory explained on YouTube that "firefighters conducted the burn to remove fuel available to the Las Conchas Fire."

Las Conchas Fire, social media *Integration--NYT*

Combat the flames continue. The lab, which has been closed since Monday, would stay shuttered through Friday, said a laboratory spokesman, Jeff Berger, though essential functions and personnel would remain.

Lab representatives are using [the facility's Twitter account](#) to get information to the public and the press, and even to combat false rumors, Mr. Berger said. One [recent update](#) described firefighting measures near the Los Alamos radioactive waste storage and disposal facility, called Area G.

#NM fire: Near Area G, crews reducing grasses, shrubs, and small trees with industrial-sized mowers and large-vegetation mulching machines.

Thu Jun 30 11:52:55 via web



LosAlamosNationalLab
LosAlamosNatLab

Las Conchas Fire, social media *Integration--NYT*

Laboratory representatives are also posting pictures of the firefighting efforts on the facility's [Flickr page](#), where a photo stream usually dedicated to experiments and lab equipment has become dominated by fire trucks, smoke and flames. (Earlier in the week, NASA posted [this satellite image](#), of the blaze around Los Alamos on Monday.)

The laboratory's Twitter feed also points to relevant video and information elsewhere on the Internet, like this time-lapse video of the fire posted on YouTube by a blogger named Michael Zeiler:



Mr. Zeiler explained on YouTube:

Las Conchas Fire, social media

Conclusion

- Worked well, but could have worked better
- Our social media activity appreciated by
 - Employees
 - Customers
 - Elected officials
 - Journalists
 - Parent organizations
 - Neighbors, relatives, similar institutions, others interested in Los Alamos National Laboratory
- Questions or comments?