



## 2024 WILDFIRE SEASON WINE INSTITUTE MEMBER MEDIA GUIDE

If a wildfire is burning in your area or you have already been impacted by a wildfire, media may be eager to get your firsthand experience on the situation to include in a story. Wine Institute is always standing by to support, guide or take any media inquiries that you as a member may not be comfortable handling on your own.

***If you choose to pass a media inquiry along to Wine Institute, please know we are here to help, and you can reach us anytime:***

**Wine Institute's Communications Department:** email us at [communications@wineinstitute.org](mailto:communications@wineinstitute.org) or call Director of Communications Gino DiCaro at (916) 730-3443.

Wine Institute encourages members to follow communications guidelines and best practices to ensure you, your business and your employees aren't portrayed unfavorably or misrepresented in the media.

***If you choose to engage in a media inquiry on your own, we recommend the following best practices:***

**News Sources** – Wineries and growers should not serve as news sources for overall regional/statewide numbers of acres burned, structures damaged and people evacuated. Reporters should look to state fire organizations for this information.

**Media Inquiries** – Members who choose to share information with a media representative regarding wildfires are requested to comment on their own properties and refer media to regional/state wine associations for comments about the impact of fires on the wine industry in their region or state. Communication professionals at these organizations are tracking overall winery information. A story about one badly damaged property, while individually devastating, could create a misperception about what is happening overall, so referring media to the regional/state associations is a good practice.

**Check with Associations on Messaging** – Industry members are advised to check with their regional or state wine associations to learn what is being shared on wildfire communications. These communications will often provide information on what percent a specific region accounts for in overall state wine production.

**Message Points** – Key messaging is important as you talk to members of the media. As mentioned previously, you should stick to your specific winery or vineyards’ situation, but you can incorporate key industry message points when discussing the 2024 wildfire season, including:

***Commitment of the Industry***

The safety of our communities, workforce and first responders remains the top priority for California vintners and wineries.

***Proactive Efforts***

To date, wineries, vineyards and state and local officials have been taking necessary precautions to best prepare for the 2024 wildfire season.

***Perspective and Context***

California wine country is vast, with winegrapes grown in 49 of the state’s 58 counties. The majority of California’s wineries and vineyards have been untouched by wildfires.

**Smoke Exposure Term** – The term “smoke exposure” is more accurate than the term “smoke taint” when communicating about wildfires. Grapes exposed to smoke may not necessarily result in substandard wines. The “smoke taint” term is misleading in that it helps generate lingering consumer perceptions that wines from this vintage will not be of high quality.

**Smoke Research** – Members of the West Coast Smoke Research Task Force (UC Davis, Oregon State University and the University of Washington State and others) are working and collaborating on smoke research. This work is ongoing and is utilizing \$5.5 million in federal funding that Wine Institute helped obtain for research for 2024 and we are seeking an additional \$5.5 million in 2025. Since 2020 Congress has appropriated a total of \$20.5 million for smoke research.

To find additional resources to support your needs during the 2024 wildfire season, please visit the [Wine Institute website](#) for guides, webinars and information on topics including preparedness, risk reduction, grants, recovery and smoke exposure testing.

Wine Institute continues to work closely with federal, state and local governments to ensure that wineries and vineyards can navigate wildfire challenges. We are actively engaged in advocating for support and economic relief to preserve our businesses.

***Wine Institute sends our thoughts to all those who have been impacted by wildfires.***