This document outlines guidelines specifically relating to videos produced for an external audience, which is intended for marketing or promoting Texas A&M Forest Service and its departments and programs.

# Types of videos

1. [Informal Videos](https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/TFSMain/Finance_and_Admin/Staff_Resources/Content/Informal%20Video%20Guidelines.pdf)

These videos should stand in stark contrast to videos “Produced” by or for Texas A&M Forest Service. These videos are happening-now, news-style video clips that are short in duration (typically, the shorter the better) and are intended for immediate release and distribution via agency social media pages. All videos should be shot in landscape unless intended explicitly for social media “stories.” There are three types of videos in this category: unedited, edited and live.

* + Unedited videos are short, live-to-tape clips intended to share actual events as they unfold. There is no digital editing included.
  + Edited videos have minimal edits, primarily to clarify sequence or action, and condense the length of the video to adhere to duration requirements. There is no production music or text overlays added.
  + Live videos are streamed in real time. While it’s acceptable to use a smart phone, lapel microphones and clear audio should be a top priority

1. Produced Videos

Produced videos are generally of the highest technical quality. They include compelling content, experienced storytelling, expert editing and professionally trained considerations for lighting, sound and direction. A produced video can include a script, voice-over, ambient and produced sound. It can also include titles, graphic overlays and a call to action, such as a website for viewers to find more information. These videos are usually marked with an agency logo and adhere to all agency guidelines on professional video development.

# Content

Texas A&M Forest Service videos should be professional in nature, clear in message, and appropriate to their audience. Examples of agency-appropriate video content include, but are not limited to: informational, educational and promotional material; capturing events; messages that require visual, sound and/or motion; and content for divisional and departmental initiatives.

# Notification/Coordination/Quality Control Process

1. [Informal Videos](https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/uploadedFiles/TFSMain/Finance_and_Admin/Staff_Resources/Content/Informal%20Video%20Guidelines.pdf)

No notifications or reviews are needed so long as the guidelines linked above are followed.

1. Produced Videos

The Communications and Marketing Advisory Committee (CMAC) should be notified prior to initiating produced video projects. The purpose of this notification is to improve agency awareness and coordination of planned projects and help avoid redundancy or duplication of effort. Notification can be made by sending a brief project description to [videos@tfs.tamu.edu.](mailto:videos@tfs.tamu.edu) Units should also contact the Communications Office to discuss ideas related to the project or for assistance with script writing and/or production outlining.

Finished produced videos must be reviewed by the CMAC before public use. The purpose of this review is quality control and compliance verification to agency standards. The CMAC will promptly review produced videos and provide appropriate guidance.

# Overall Project Guidelines

The Communications Office is responsible for posting final videos to the Texas A&M Forest Service YouTube Channel and social media pages. Agency videos must not be hosted on personal YouTube accounts, or other unofficial video sharing websites. If other platforms are explored in the future, these guidelines will be revised and updated.

# Use of Copyrighted Material with Permission of Copyright Holder

Videos may include copyrighted material with the approval of the copyright holder. Video producers should secure documentation of permission from the copyright holder and document this in the video credits. Even with permission, it is normally desirable to quote excerpts and only as much of the work as is necessary to make a point.

# Use of Copyrighted Material without Permission of Copyright Holder

It may also be permissible to include copyrighted material in a video without the approval of the copyright holder, if that use can be considered fair use under copyright law. Copyright law contains no precise rules defining exactly what qualifies as "fair use." The four general tests are purpose of the use, nature of the material quoted (e.g., published or unpublished), amount quoted, and effect on the market for the material. Use of excerpts of copyrighted works (audio, text or visual) within an educational lecture such as a conference presentation, for purposes of commentary and analysis, will normally qualify as fair use. If your use of a copyrighted work exceeds these guidelines, or if you have any question about the fair use status of a copyrighted work you plan to use, contact the Communications Manager.

# Copyright of Videos

Professional video service providers will normally retain copyright in their video, unless other arrangements are made (for example, with a contractor). If the producer wishes to retain copyright, he or she must sign a media release form granting Texas A&M Forest Service permission to distribute, or otherwise use, the video, along with any restrictions that apply. Videos produced by agency personnel on agency time with agency resources for agency use are property of the agency, not the employee, and are free of copyright. Videos for public consumption are also subject to fair use laws, meaning they can be used by other entities without explicit permission from our agency.

# Video Quality Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to be used as guidance for producing the best quality video and audio. In order to represent Texas A&M Forest Service well, we ask that whenever possible the content producer consider the following tips when recording and editing video:

1. Setup and Capture
   * Lighting and visibility: Capture video in well-lit areas; the subjects of the video should be easily discernable.
   * Framing and focus: All shots should be clearly focused and well-framed; zooming should only be used for focusing attention and should otherwise, generally be avoided.
   * Stability: Use a tripod or other stabilizing device, if available. Keep the camera as stable as possible.
   * Audio: Audio should be at an appropriate volume and clearly understood throughout the video, with minimal to no ambient noise. Use of an external microphone, such as a lapel mic, is recommended for maximum clarity.
2. Editing
   * Inlay text: If adding text to the video, choose a standard font. Proofread the text for accuracy and grammar.
   * Graphics: Generally avoid adding graphics and animations.
   * Effects: Fade ins/fade outs, etc. should not detract from the message of the video. They should be smooth and not abrupt and choppy. Straight cut transitions are almost always preferred. How-To Use Simple Cut Transitions When Editing Video and Why You Should<http://tubularinsights.com/simple-cut-transitions/>
   * Dead air (no audio): Edit out when possible.
   * Background noise: unintended ambient noise, breaks, skips, hissing should be edited out.
   * Volume control: Equalize the volume so that one speaker or subject is not noticeably louder than the other.
   * Background music/audio: If adding background audio intentionally, balance with primary audio.
3. Length

Video length should be determined by subject matter and video category, but in general videos should be as short as possible to optimize engagement and audience retention. Produced videos can be broken into two groups – Short Form and Long Form – with varying categories falling under each.

Short Form Videos are under 3 minutes in length. Categories include:

* + Public Service Announcements
    - Length may vary depending on the complexity of the announcement, but try to keep length at quarter-minute intervals (e.g. 0:15, 0:30, 0:60, 0:90)
  + Promotional Videos
    - 60 seconds or less.
    - Examples: [Scenic Views Application](https://youtu.be/fLgOCaPzb4c); [TreeMD Application](https://youtu.be/JR2Zxb5PQRM)
  + Scripted Videos
    - Voice over narration alone tends to lose interest after a few minutes
    - Example: [We Are Texas A&M Forest Service](https://youtu.be/XSW2BB256fY)
  + Educational Overview Videos
    - These videos give a general overview of an industry-relevant subject.
    - Many [Ask a Forester](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeudtKjcZlzx2T2MK6zfn2oHuSa7NwlTE) videos fall under this category
  + Event Recaps
    - Event recaps can summarize a public event, a natural disaster, or a wildfire.
    - Example: [Green Ambassadors Youth Led Grassroots Movement](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR9ygBCRd7w)

Long Form Videos are over 3 minutes in length. Categories include:

* + “How-To” Videos
    - While not restricted to 3 minutes, these usually perform best when they are no more than 4 or 5 minutes.
    - Examples: [How to Water your Trees](https://youtu.be/ciEjYvwwQZs); [How to Plant a Tree in your Yard](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Dmmaemw4jo&t=63s)
  + Detailed Informational / Educational Videos
    - In contrast to Educational Overview Videos, these dive deeper in detail and are generally used as resources for industry experts and specialists
    - Examples: [M1078 Walkaround](https://youtu.be/Sa-lmFmLXno); [Taking a Sample to Verify Oak Wilt](https://youtu.be/QQKNzqIyJSo)
  + Documentary-style Storytelling
    - These videos vary in length depending on the story being told.
    - Examples: [Oak Wilt Rising](https://youtu.be/dxRv_fqIP7U); [The Makings of a Moon Tree](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvTVHJJlws8)

1. Technical Standards

The following technical standards should be followed as much as possible.

* + Preferred file formats: Quicktime (.mov) and MPEG (.mp4).
  + Aspect ratio: Native aspect ratio (e.g., 16:9). If using a mobile device, shoot in landscape. Images resulting in window boxing will generally not be approved for produced videos, although they may be acceptable for social media clips.
  + Resolution: High definition video at either 1080p or higher.

1. Technical Standards for Social Media Versions of the Video

Facebook and Instagram

* + File type .mov or .mp4
  + File size less than 10 GB
  + Standard recommended video length is less than 90 seconds

Twitter

* + File type .mov or .mp4
  + File size maximum 512 MB
  + Standard recommended video length is less than 90 seconds

1. Branding and Credit Screen Standards

All video submissions must contain:

* + Reference to the agency as Texas A&M Forest Service in all instances.
  + Official agency logos (most appropriate version for optimal display). This is usually displayed at the end of the video.
  + Credits should be reserved for Long Form Videos only. Limit credits to logos when possible, and avoid scrolling screen credits
  + If adding video credits, center all credits in a standard font at the end of the video.
  + Include a call to action at the end of the video. Example: include a relevant website for viewer to learn more, register, etc.
  + If including partner logos, use their approved logo files and adhere to their agency branding standards.
  + Use title and/or closing slides/screens.

Standard fonts for video production:

* + Sans serif fonts. These are typically the best choices when it comes to video and motion graphics. They have a cleaner, more readable appearance. Anything with Gothic, Egyptian, Antique, Grotesque, or Doric in the font name will be sans serif. Helvetica and Arial are two of the most common sans serif fonts.
* Calibri
* Gill Sans
* Franklin Gothic
* Arial
* Helvetica
  + Serif fonts. In general, you should stay away from these types of fonts, as they are difficult to read when used in video projects. But a few of the simpler serif fonts commonly used in video production are:
* Minion Pro
* Garmond
* Trajan
* Futura
* Bodini
* Rockwell

# Submitting Video and Permissions

Texas A&M Forest Service video producers are responsible for:

1. securing permissions/media release forms from subjects;
2. submitting completed video and permissions forms to [videos@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:videos@tfs.tamu.edu) for review; and
3. providing additional metadata, such as title, summary, date, etc., as needed.

# Publishing Video

The Communications Office will:

1. review the video for compliance with production and permission guidelines;
2. publish the video to the Texas A&M Forest Service YouTube Channel and Social Media Pages; and
3. add the video to playlists, social media rotation, and other marketing schedules as agreed upon with the video producer.

**Contact:** [Communications and Marketing Advisory Committee](mailto:CMAC@tfs.tamu.edu)