



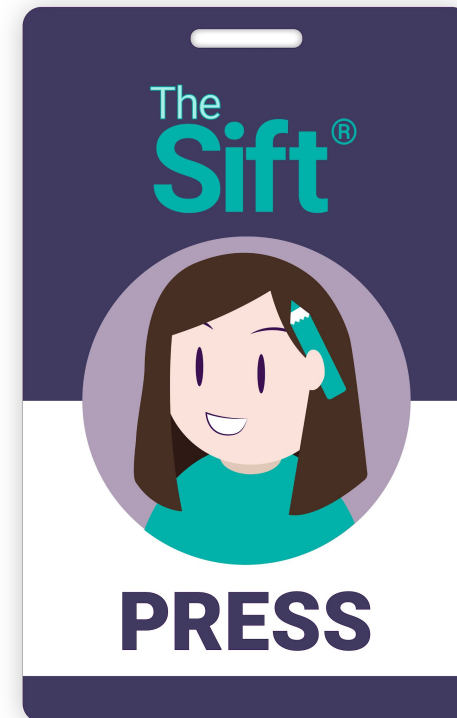
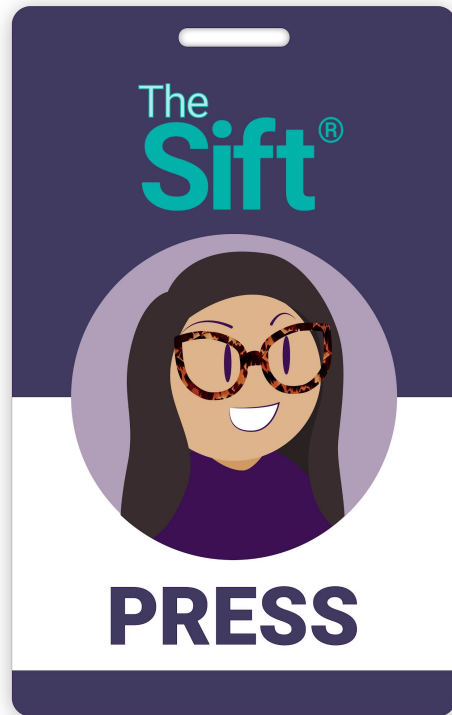
News goggles

AP wildfire story

Sept. 14, 2020

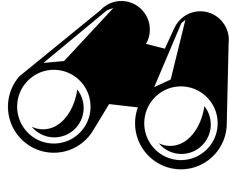
First things first

- Be sure to view these slides in presentation mode.
- Suzannah and Hannah, former reporters who work at NLP, are going to help you examine this topic through journalists' eyes.



First things first. . .

The Big Picture



- Read [the original story](#)
- Use these slides to guide your reading
- **Be sure to view slides in presentation mode**
- Download our [full annotations](#) in Microsoft Word

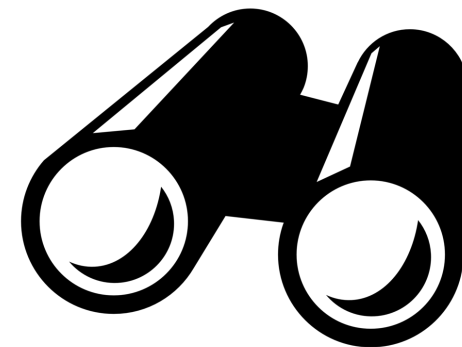
Lingo List

Journalists have their own vocabulary. Here's this week's newsroom lingo.

- **Lede:** The opening paragraph(s) of a story. Pronounced "lead."
- **Pickup:** Information "picked up" from another news organization. Reporters try to confirm this information firsthand.
- **Graf:** Short for "paragraph."
- **AP:** Short for "Associated Press."

What to look for

1. **The lede:** How does the AP begin this story?
2. **The sources:** Who are the “authorities” referenced?
3. **The debate:** Some argue that all wildfire coverage should directly mention climate change. Can you spot any direct references to climate change in this story?



The lede

How does this story begin?

California fire that killed 3 threatens thousands of homes

By TERENCE CHEA and BRIAN MELLEY today

OROVILLE, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California wildfire threatened thousands of homes Thursday after winds whipped it into a monster that incinerated houses in small mountain communities and killed at least three people.

Each article begins with a "lede."

A good lede (pronounced "lead") should provide the most important and newsworthy information from the get-go. This lede highlights the impact of the wildfire, including the death toll.

The sources

Who are the “authorities” mentioned in the second paragraph?

California fire that killed 3 threatens thousands of homes

By TERENCE CHEA and BRIAN MELLEY today

Several other people were critically burned and about 2,000 structures, including homes and other buildings were damaged or destroyed in the foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada, authorities said.

The information here is attributed to "authorities."

But who are these "authorities"? Grab your news goggles! Let's read more and try to figure it out.

California fire that killed 3 threatens thousands of homes

By TERENCE CHEA and BRIAN MELLEY today

Severely damaged homes and other structures in the area, Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea pleaded.

Butte County spokeswoman Amy Travis described the evacuation center as a temporary staging area while officials tried to line up hotel rooms for families displaced by the fire amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As of Wednesday, 140 homes and another 140 were on a waiting list.

Remember: good journalism attributes information to sources — people or entities in a position to know the information provided.

Pause: What's a pickup?

Here's another authority.

Honea announced the three deaths but declined to provide details. California Highway Patrol Officer Ben Draper told the Bay Area News Group that one person was found in a car and apparently had

But note: Journalists would say that this information was “picked up” — or, picked up from reporting by another news organization. By citing the Bay Area News Group, AP is making clear where this information came from (again, being transparent). News organizations ideally want to use their own reporting to distinguish their work from other, competing news organizations so an outlet’s journalists may be chasing this information to confirm it. If they get their own confirmation, they typically would update the sourcing to reflect that in a later version of the story. Picking up information from another standards-based news organization is a fast way to get pertinent information to readers.

The debate

Some argue that “climate change” should appear in every story about wildfires. Let’s examine how the AP handled this debate.

California fire that killed 3 threatens thousands of homes

By TERENCE CHEA and BRIAN MELLEY today

Even in the midst of its dry, hot, windy fire season, California has experienced wildfires advancing with unprecedented speed and ferocity.

This paragraph links to a separate AP story about wildfires and climate change.

Some argue that all wildfire coverage should mention climate change directly to be sure people understand its connections to events like these and the potential impact. Do you agree with AP's approach here?

Note

As one of the examples in this week's Viral rumor rundown explains, even as news organizations like the AP were working to provide the public with verified, fact-based information about the fires, others online were spreading misinformation. See:

- ["As wildfires rage, false antifa rumors spur pleas from police"](#) (Brandy Zadrozny and Ben Collins, NBC News).
- ["False Rumors That Activists Set Wildfires Exasperate Officials"](#) (Kate Conger, Davey Alba and Mike Baker, The New York Times).
- ["Facebook says it's removing false claims about who started Oregon wildfires"](#) (Kelly Murray, Donie O'Sullivan and Hollie Silverman, CNN Business).

News goggles: next steps

Discuss: The story begins by spotlighting the death toll from the wildfire. Is this sensationalizing? Why would leading with human loss be important? Consider what makes a story newsworthy and what information is the most important for the public to know. Do you agree that every news report about wildfires should mention that climate change makes them more common and severe? Is doing so showing bias about a controversial issue, or is it an example of protecting the public's interest in a fair and accurate way?

Idea: Review the sources used in this AP report. Are the sources diverse? Why or why not? Do you think including diverse sources (in terms of age, gender, race, economic background, etc.) affects the news coverage in any way? If so, how?

Resource: [“Understanding Bias”](#) (NLP’s Checkology® virtual classroom).

Thank you!



A future founded on facts

 /NewsLitProject

 @NewsLitProject

 @NewsLitProject

 @NewsLitProject

 [LinkedIn.com/company/NewsLitProject](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NewsLitProject)

 [Youtube.com/NewsLiteracyProject](https://www.youtube.com/NewsLiteracyProject)

[newslit.org](https://www.newslit.org)