508 Compliance Basics

For Public Information Officers

Hanna McBrearty, PIOF trainee, MNICS Team A
Park Ranger, USFWS

- What is 508 compliance?
- Why is it important?
- How to write alt-text
- Creating accessible documents
- Videos: closed captioning and audio description

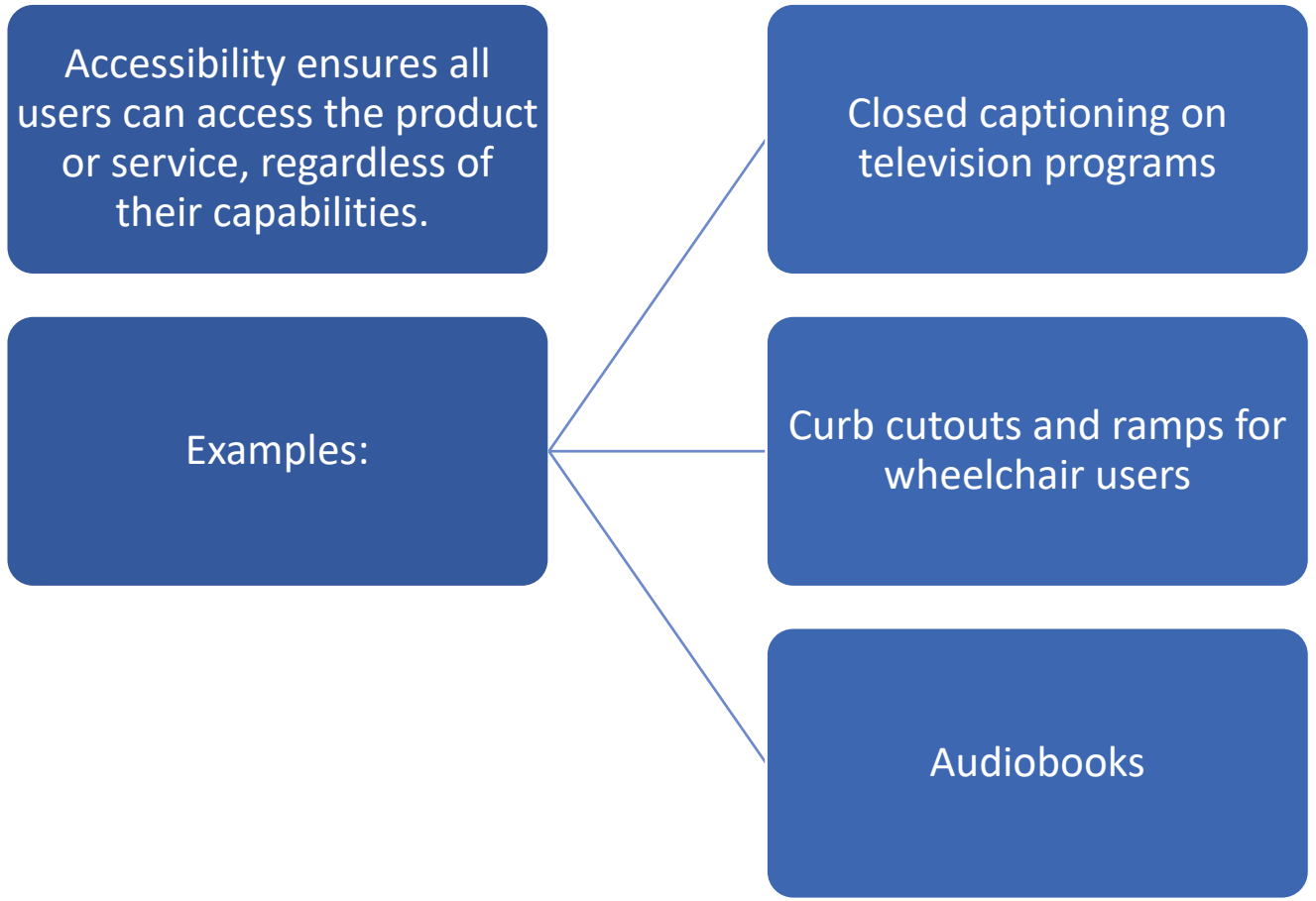
What is 508 compliance?

In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities.

The law (29 U.S.C § 794 (d)) applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology.

Under Section 508, **agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information comparable to the access available to others**.

Accessible Design Benefits Everyone



What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, or system that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Some AT devices are well-known:

- Eyeglasses
- Hearing aids
- Canes
- Wheelchairs

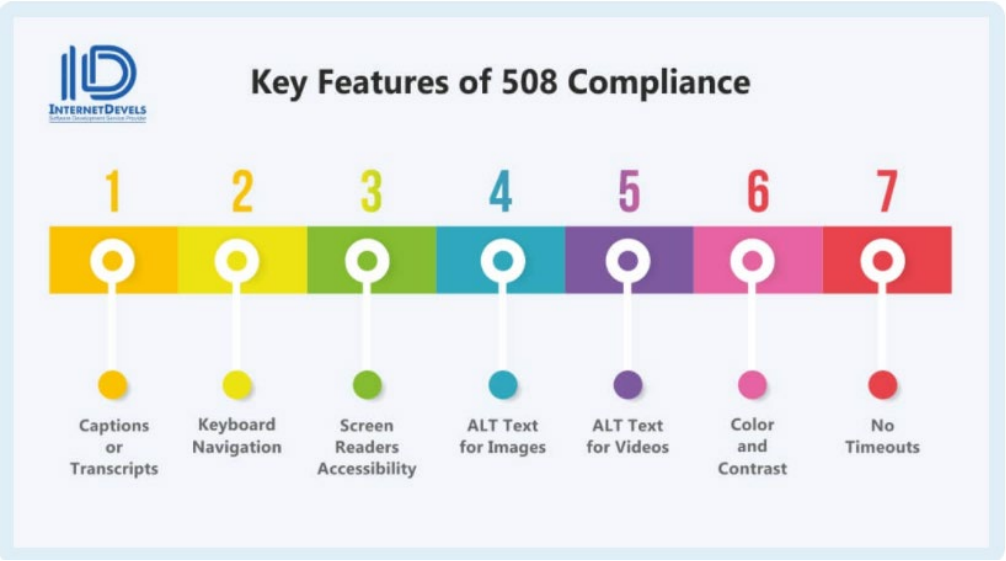
AT software includes the following:

- Text-to-speech converters
- Screen magnifiers
- On-screen keyboards
- Speech-to-text converters

AT relies on proper use of the delivery format.

What needs to be described?

- Photos
- Website
- Documents
- Forms
- Videos

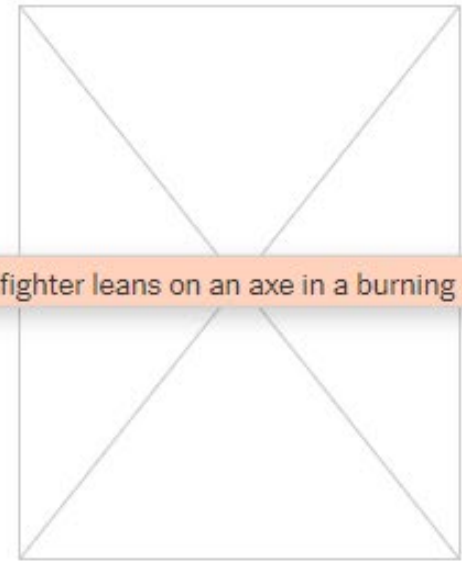


Social Media Accessibility Tips

- Don’t overuse caps
- Use camel case for multi-word hashtags
- Put hashtags and mentions at the end
- Limit emoji use

Neon sign reading, “open.”

Cute puppy lying on sofa.


A firefighter leans on an axe in a burning forest.

A painting of a person.

May be an image of one person and strawberry.

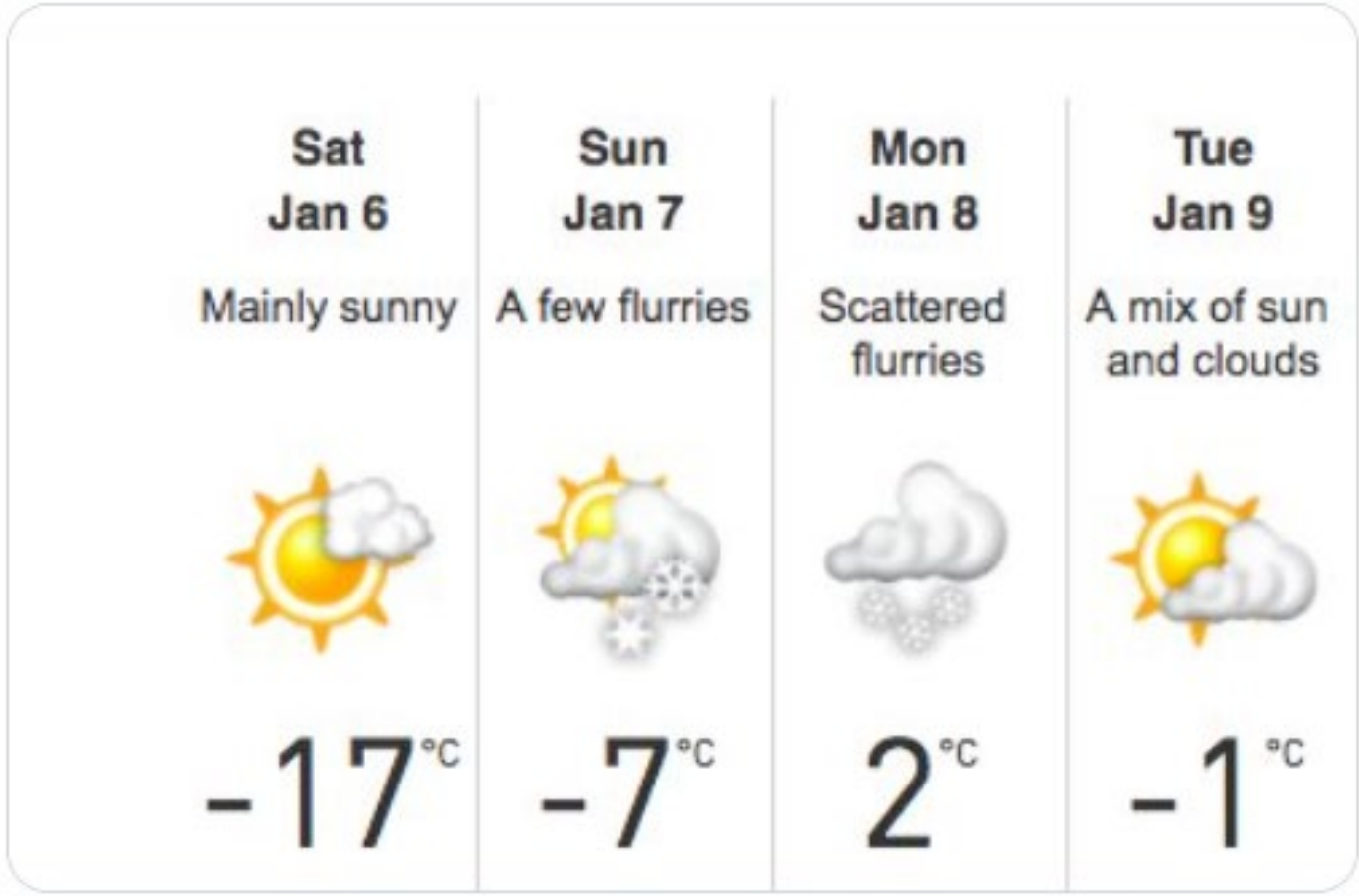
Mona_Lisa,_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci,_from_C2RMF_retouched.jpg

Example alt text descriptions from Microsoft Word, Facebook and Wikipedia.

Robot Hugs @RobotHugsComic · Jan 5, 2018

Replying to @RobotHugsComic

Tweet: Don't worry TO, It's going to get better soon!!
Unhelpful description: Toronto weather forecast
Helpful description: Forecast for Toronto temperatures, showing -18 Celsius today improving to -1 Celsius by Tuesday.



3 136 847

Tips for Writing Alt-Text

Keep it concise and accurate.

Convey the content: There's a huge gap between "Image of a chart," and something like, "A bar chart illustrates that there has been a year-over-year increase in forest fires, peaking at 100 this year."

Skip saying "image of" or "photograph of."

Transcribe text. If the image has copy that is central to its meaning, make sure you include it in the description.

Use proper grammar.

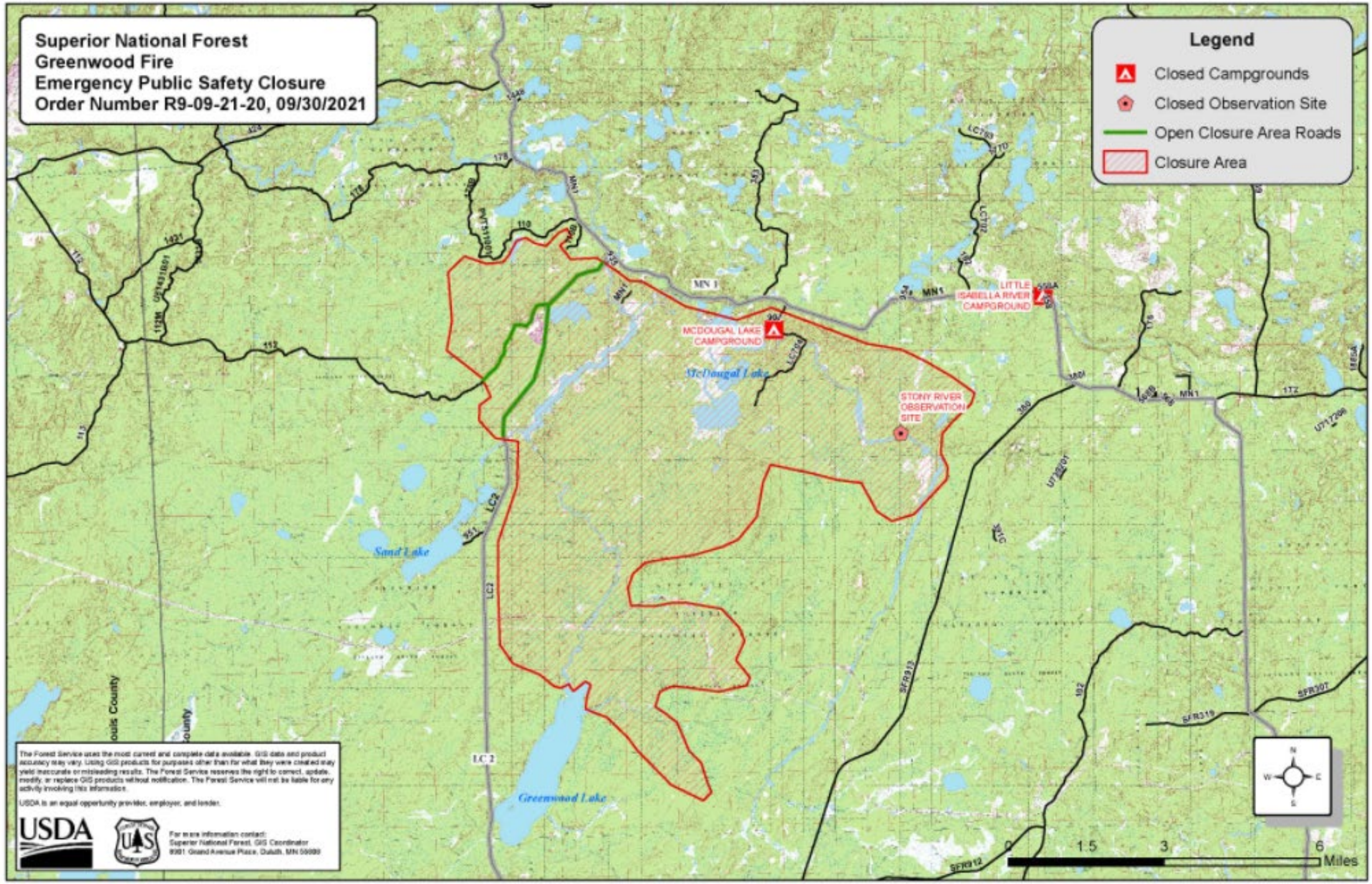
Need not be redundant (should not be the same as adjacent body of text).

Writing Alt-Text for Maps

Start with macro description, then offer expanded description.

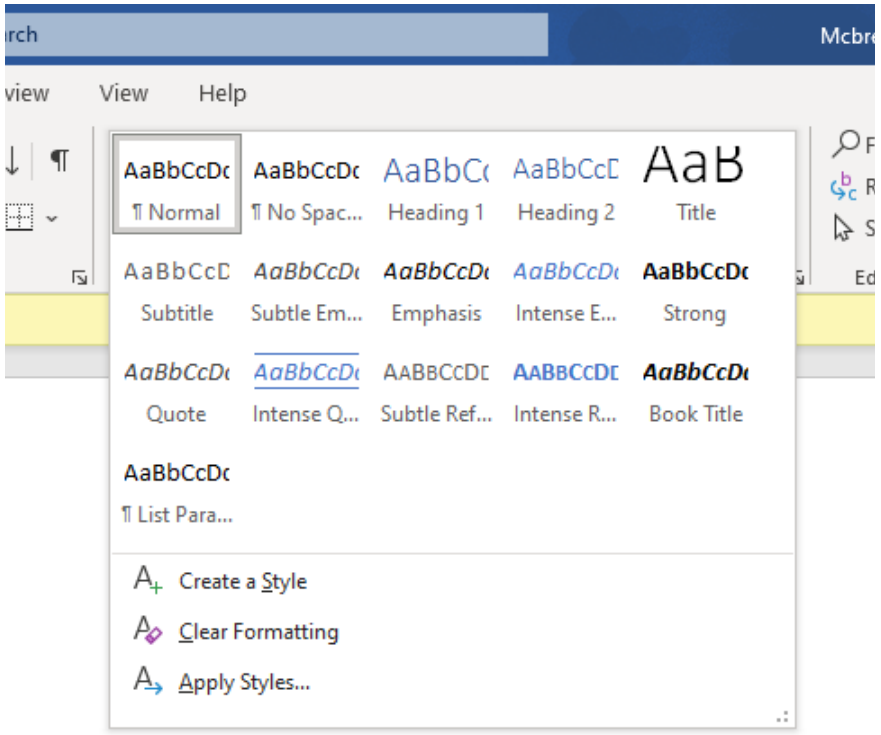
Appropriate to write 'a map of..'

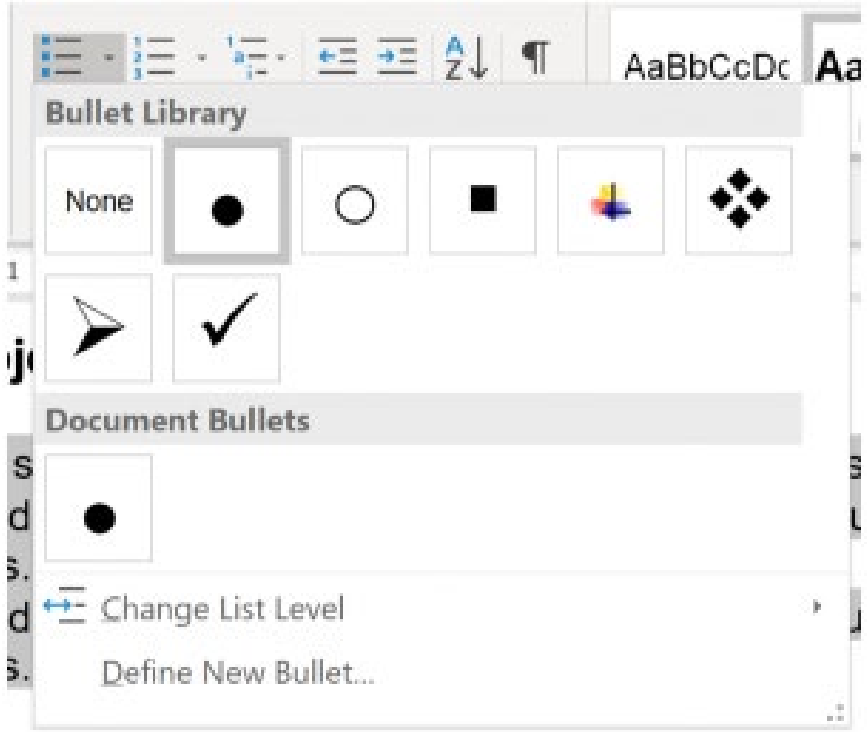
Depending on where you are writing it the alt text may have a character limit. Provide additional information in caption, body of adjacent text, or text of social media post.


Superior National Forest
Greenwood Fire
Emergency Public Safety Closure
Order Number R9-09-21-20, 09/30/2021
Legend
Closed Campgrounds
Closed Observation Site
Open Closure Area Roads
Closure Area
MCDOUGAL LAKE CAMPGROUND
LITTLE ISABELLA RIVER CAMPGROUND
STONY RIVER OBSERVATION SITE
McDougal Lake
Sand Lake
Greenwood Lake
MN 1
LC 2
0
1.5
3
6
Miles
USDA
For more information contact:
Superior National Forest, GIS Coordinator
8901 Grand Avenue Place, Duluth, MN 55808

Creating Accessible Documents

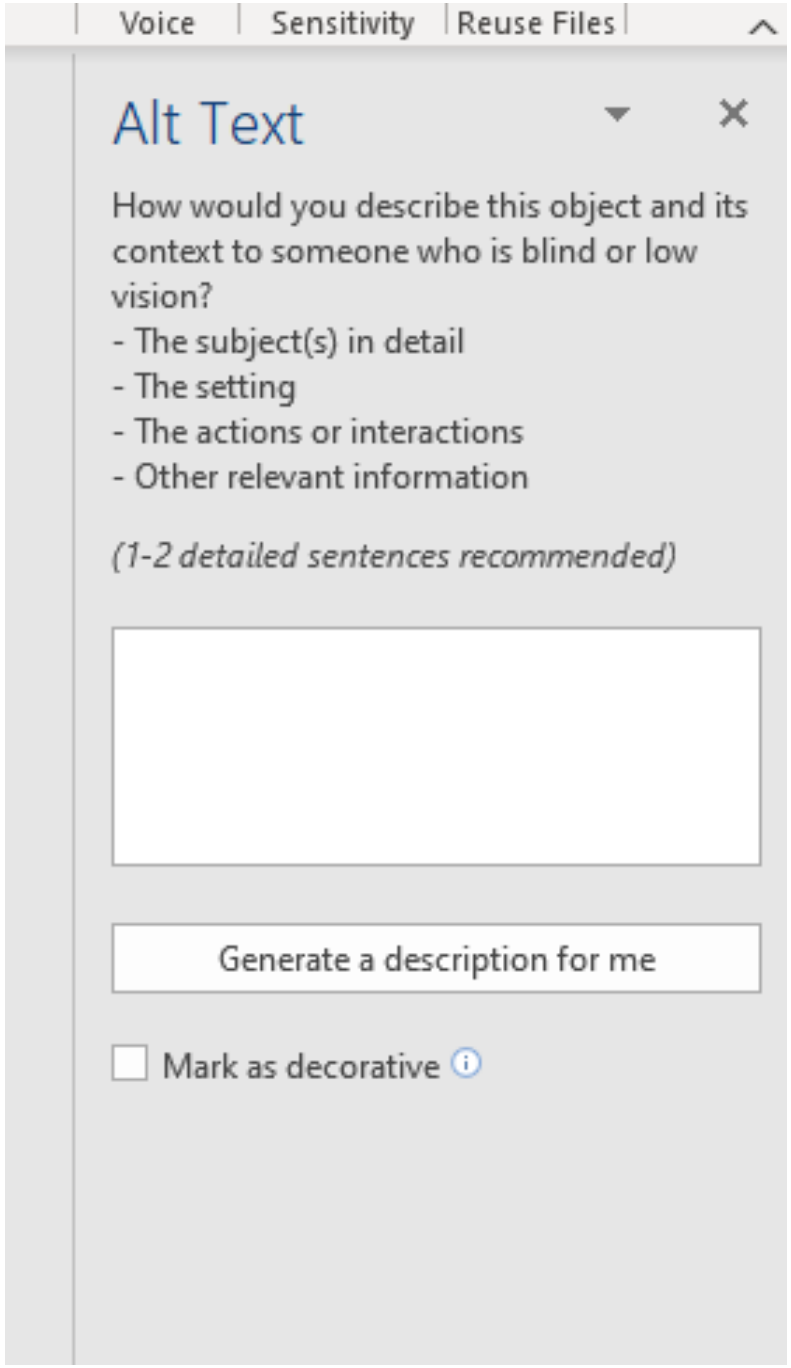
- HTML and PDF are preferred, but starting with accessible word documents makes it easier
- Use built in formatting tools



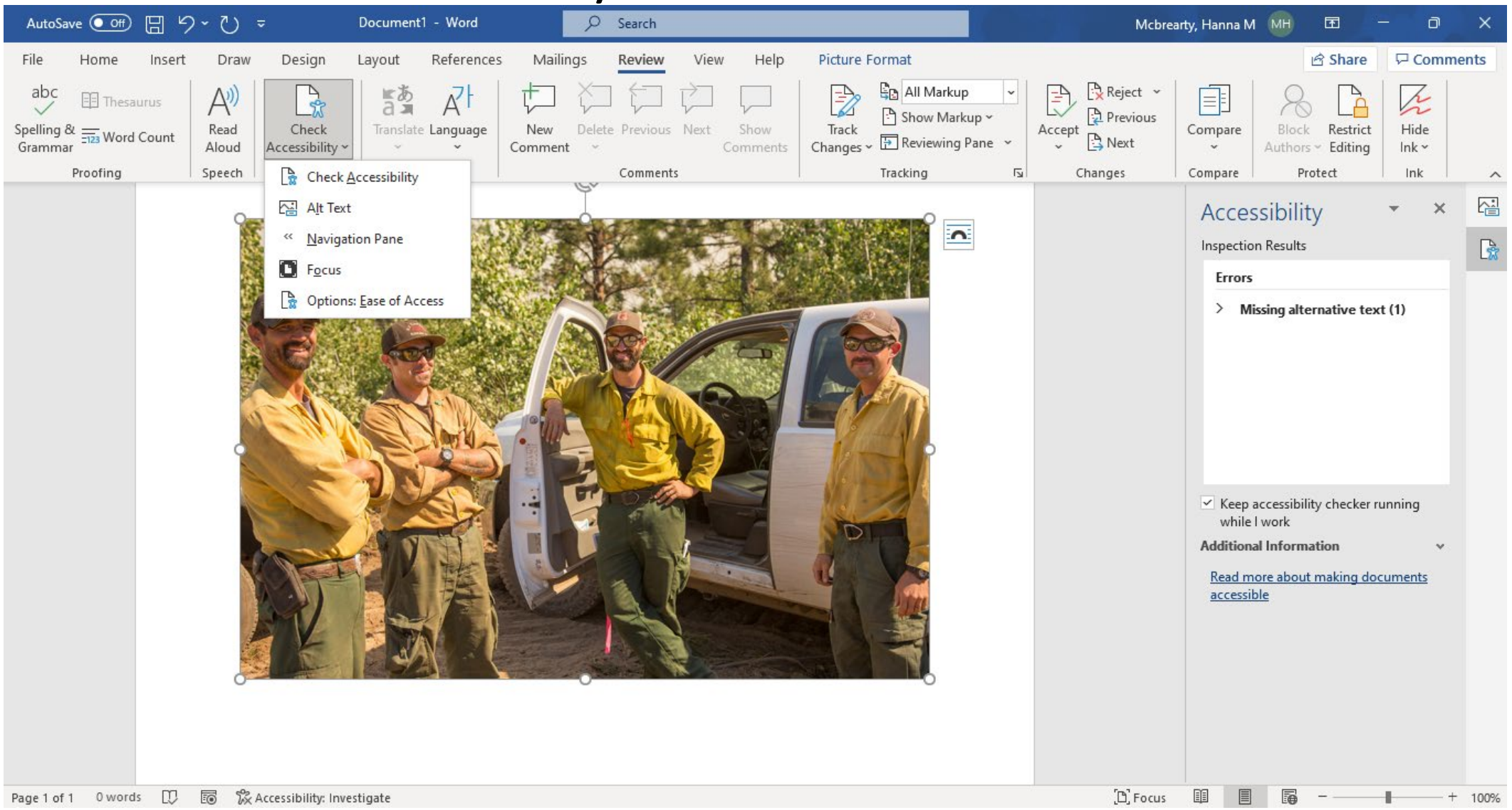


Creating Accessible Documents

- Add alt-text for images: right click, select edit alt-text
- Use tables wisely



Run an Accessibility Check



Convert to PDF

Windows	Go to File > “Save As…” and select PDF from the choices provided. By default this produces a PDF that preserves the document’s accessibility features. When saving, select *Options* and be sure that “Document structure tags for accessibility” is checked. This is checked by default, but could become unchecked under certain circumstances.
Mac	Go to File > “Save As…” and select PDF from the choices provided. By default this produces a PDF that preserves the document’s accessibility features. When saving, be sure the radio button labeled “Best for electronic distribution and accessibility” is selected.

Aichele Road Fire Update 06102021.pdf - Adobe Acrobat Pro DC (32-bit)

File Edit View E-Sign Window Help

Home Tools Aichele Road Fire U...

Accessibility Close

Order

- Aichele Road Fire Update 06102021
  - Page 1
    - [1]
    - [2] Aichele Road Fire Final U
    - [3] MNICS Team A, Incident
    - [4] Fire Information: 2021
    - [5] Path Incident Statistics
    - [6] Image

Figure - https://lh6.googleusercontent....

re Final Update

Thursday, June 10, 2021

NICS Team A, Incident Commander Ernie Schmitt

Fire Information: 2021.aicheleroad@firenet.gov

Location: approximately 15 miles southwest of Baudette off the Aichele Forest Road near Beltrami Island State Forest.

Yesterday's Accomplishments: Precipitation and high humidity kept fire activity minimal as firefighters continued mop up operations. Crews continued to locate and extinguish hot spots detected by the infrared flight from June 8. As fire activity diminished, resources were demobilized from the incident.

Today's Planned Actions: The Incident Command Team will transition command back to the local unit this morning. Firefighters will patrol and grid the fire area today and mop up any remaining hot spots. The fire is currently 100% contained, which means that the perimeter has been secured but the fire has not been called controlled or out yet. The status of the fire will be reassessed on a regular basis. This is the final fire update.

Table

Containment:	100 percent
Structures damaged:	0
Structures destroyed:	0
Injuries:	none
Date detected:	June 5, 2021
Cause:	lightning
Resources	
Personnel:	8
Engines:	0
Truck Vehicles:	1
Aircraft:	0

Weather and Fire Behavior: High near 81 with northeast wind 5-10 mph. Cloudy in the morning with gradual clearing then chance for thunderstorms this evening. High humidity today and precipitation yesterday will reduce fire activity

Autotag Document
Autotag Form Fields
Reading Options
Accessibility Check
Accessibility Report
Identify Form Fields
Set Alternate Text
Setup Assistant
Reading Order

Type here to search

12:32 PM 3/13/2022

Videos

Closed captioning that is accurate and synchronus:

- The audio parts of your video appear as text at the appropriate time and give access to people who are hearing impaired or deaf.

Provide audio descriptions or adequate narration:

- A description of a video's visual elements, gives access to people who are blind or visually impaired.

Edit video

Introducing more control over auto-generated captions

Auto-generated captions now get high or low accuracy ratings. Low-accuracy captions won't be added to your videos until you review them, but high-accuracy captions will still be added automatically by default

Auto-generate captions On

Make captions unavailable to viewers until I review

Upload caption files (.srt) Upload

Write captions Write

Video details

Add details to your video and create your video post.

Captions & subtitles AUTO ON

Adding captions and subtitles can improve your video's watch time, distribution and accessibility.

Thumbnail

Distribution

Choose where your video will appear and who can watch or crosspost it.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

••• View post Published Save

Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now." - van Goethe
0:29 / 10:32
Subtitles
Options
Off
English(Provided by Author)
Español(Provided by Author)

How to Provide Audio Description

Build	Build the descriptions into the video—The easiest way. Speakers identify themselves and their surroundings, describe what is happening in video.
Make	Make another video—one with audio descriptions and one without.
Add	Add an extra audio track—your video can have more than one audio track attached to it, and the user can choose which one to play.

Build it into the video

1. Verbally cover all displayed visual information
2. Identify the speaker and speaker changes
3. Explain any participation by audience members
4. Take frequent pauses

Takeaways

Images must have alt-text: be clear, concise, and accurate.

Utilize tools such as formatting, accessibility checker, auto-captioning.

Bake it in, don't bolt it on! When creating content, start making it accessible from the beginning.

Resources

- Refer to agency policy, accessibility coordinators
- Accessibility training and workshops: https://webaim.org/
- Audio description training and tools: https://unidescription.org/