How to be the most bitchin' blogger, map-maker, and Inciweb post-master ever to walk the face of the earth.

(And you're welcome.)

So you think you're a blogger?

1. How to open a blog account
    a. First thing you should do: start a gmail account. Right when you get to the fire. Don't wait, because it just makes shit complicated.
    b. If you're using Blogger as your blogging tool, then your blog will be associated with the email account you started for the fire (and if you're not using Blogger, then you should really read some other "how to" blog guide, because this one ain't gonna help you).
    c. Go to www.blogger.com. Follow the easy instructions for starting a blog.
    d. NOTE: If you have more than one gmail account, then you'll want to make sure your FIRE gmail account is open when you're blogging. If your personal account is open, then Google gets really confused and shuts down your fire Blogger account. Google may have invented Google Glass, but they haven't figured this out yet.
2. How to start your blog
    a. I'm not going to go into extreme detail, cuz I gotta go to an evening campfire program in a half hour. But here's the Bisquick version:
        i. Use the "Post" tool to post blogs. I suggest coming up with a protocol for every blog title: date/time/title, date/title, etcs. Doesn't matter what it is, but once you come up with it, stick to it.
        ii. You can use the "layout" tool to build blog gadgets: embedded maps, text boxes, link boxes, twitter feeds, translate buttons, etc. Play with it. Have fun. The possibilities are as endless as a Leo Tolstoy novel.
        iii. If you want to customize the look of your blog, go into "Template", then click the orange "customize" button. Once you're in the inner sanctum, you'll need to find your way to the holy grail. Godspeed.
3. How to cowboy up, and get your blog right in the mornings
    a. You've got three posting priorities: 209 information, press release and maps. I'll go through each of these below. I suggest you do them in this order…really, any order you want, but this order worked for me.
4. How to post a table
    a. IMHO, the best way to post 209 information is in a table. It comes that way, and it should stay that way. But if you try to copy and paste and excel table into blogger, you get an ugly mess. What should you do?
    b. Tableize is what you should do!
        i. First, pull out the most relevant info in your 209 (acreage, outlook, personnel, etc.), and build an excel spreadsheet with that info in it. Your excel spreadsheet should look just like you'd want it to look on your blog.
        ii. Go to this webpage: http://www.tableizer.journalistopia.com/. Copy and paste your entire spreadsheet into the available space. Tableizer will spit out some Blogger-compatible html.
        iii. Go into blogger, and open up a new post. On the left side of your screen, you have two options right above the main text box: "compose," and "html." Click on "html."

iv. Paste in your html from tableizer.
v. Click “publish.”
vi. Look at yourself in the mirror. Yeah, YOU just did that.

5. How to post your update…and link to a PDF
    a. Posting your update is easy. Highlight your update text, paste into the body of a blog post (I suggest pasting it in as plain text to avoid compatibility issues), title your blog post according to whatever protocol you’ve chosen, and voila—you’re there.
    b. But what if someone wants to print out a PDF? Don’t worry—your fire might give you 99 problems, but linking to a PDF ain’t one.
        i. Save your update as a PDF, if you haven’t already done that.
        ii. Upload the PDF into the Google Drive linked to your fire gmail account (see why setting that thing up was important?). Make sure you share your PDF as “public” so that everyone can see it. In the upload box, there’s a link titled, “share.” If you click on that, you can see a shareable URL.
        iii. At the bottom of your press release, write, “for a PDF of this press release, click here.”
        iv. Highlight “click here.”
        v. In your blog post tool bar, click “link.”
        vi. In the link box, paste the shareable URL of your press release PDF.
        vii. Close the link box, and publish the press release.
        viii. BOOM!
6. How to post maps, and make them “clickable.”
    a. Maps are delicious. They show, not tell. They’re the visual pornography of a fire. And you gotta share pornography, right?
    b. The most tedious part of this process is getting the maps from the FTP site onto your hard drive. You can only download them one at a time. Totally sucks, and an unavoidable first step. Do it for the public, man.
    c. Make sure you download both the PDFs and the jpegs of your maps. If they’re provided in only one of those formats, ask your sit unit contact to post them in both. Cuz trust me, it makes things easier down the line.
    d. Once you have all the maps downloaded to your hard drive (to a well-labeled folder), you need to *upload* them to your Google Drive account, again to a well-named folder. Luckily, you can upload them all at once, so this step isn’t too bad. Like the press release, make sure these maps are set to “public.”
    e. Go into Blogger, and open up a new blog post.
    f. Under the “picture” button, load up a *jpeg* of one of your maps. If your map wasn’t posted as a jpeg (only as a PDF), you’ll need to convert it. I suggest the handy site: http://image.online-convert.com/convert-to-jpg.
    g. Load the picture into your post. Size it. Write a caption. Love it up a little bit.
    h. If you WANT to link your posted pictures to the originals, you can.
    i. Find the map you just posted in Blogger (jpeg or PDF, and grab the “share” URL.
    j. Click the “html” button in your blogging tools (the same one you used for Tableizer).
    k. Find the code that says, **href=“http://yourblogspotaddress.com/yourimage-info.jpg**” in your photo’s existing html. It won’t be that *exact* text…. “yourblogspotaddress.com” will be your blogspot address, and “yourimage-info.jpg” will be, er, your image info.
    l. Replace that code with the URL from Google Drive.
    m. Publish the post.
    n. Scream in ecstasy.

o. But its better to also have a link to a PDF cuz its zoomable, where a JEG is not (it gets blurry). You know how you uploaded all your JPG and PDF maps into Google Drive? Make sure the PDF you want is shareable publicly
p. Go back to the post with the JPEG. Right click to get the caption option to show.
q. Write something like “For a PDF of this map click here”.
r. Then highlight the CLICK HERE portion, go to links, paste in your drive link and save. You will have a hyperlink in the caption that pops open a PDF.

7. How to post embedded video
    a. You’ve tableized, linked, converted, and published. You think you’re hot shit. But you ain’t nothin’ until you’ve embedded.
    b. The first thing you need to do is shoot a video. Find someone interesting, and ask them to talk about something interesting for about a minute. Two minutes, if you think your readers have extra-long attention spans. I suggest that for these short videos, you don’t do anything that needs any editing. Do shoot-and-post deals.
    c. Once you’ve got your video, upload it to YouTube. There should be a YouTube account associated with your gmail (because Google owns EVERYTHING), but if there isn’t, you’ll need to create one.
    d. YouTube’s got some pretty clear steps for how to upload your video. Follow ‘em. Title your video appropriately.
    e. If you right click on your video, you can “copy embed code.” Click on that.
    f. Open up a new blog post. Title and add text as appropriate.
    g. Go into the post’s html. Paste the embed code into the html.
    h. Publish.
    i. Yeeeeeeeeah.

How to make friends and influence your sit unit leader

Maps. You love ‘em, the public loves ‘em, and God loves ‘em (trust me, I’m Jewish). But for the maps to get from the IR flight to your map-maker’s computer to the FTP site to enough printed copies for all of your bulletin boards takes a tiny miracle.

I can help you make a miracle.

1. Get yourself organized.
    a. You can’t possibly send in an organized a map request if you don’t know what you mean. I’m sure there are an infinite number of ways to organize map requests, but here’s one that’s worked for me.
    b. Click on this link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AkwIbbQZq0osdEM2bFQxdXh6MkVZMGV0UmQ3bDlaZUE&usp=sharing
    c. You’ll notice that you just opened up a Google Docs spreadsheet. Some features of this awesome spreadsheet:
        i. It keeps track of your traplines!
        ii. It keeps track of the number of maps you need!
        iii. It keeps track of your map requests!
        iv. It keeps track of what everyone is doing!
        v. And it does it with a smile!
    d. Fill out the spreadsheet nightly. Yes, nightly. It gives back what you put into it.
2. Once the spreadsheet is filled out, submit your map request.
    a. I entered an example map request into the spreadsheet. Sit units each have their own

unique forms, and you often need to stick to ‘em. But the elements in my example encompass many of the form requirements. Tailor your map request to meet the sit unit’s requirements.

b. Be prepared to adapt. The first maps won’t likely be exactly what you’re looking for. Work with your map people. They’re good people.

Charlotte’s Inciweb: That’s summmmm website!

I don’t have much to say about Inciweb, other than:

1. Take the training and get yourself a password.
2. “After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die.” *–E.B. White*
3. The end!