

State of New Mexico  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

---

**Michelle Lujan Grisham**  
Governor

**Sarah Cottrell Propst**  
Cabinet Secretary

**Todd E. Leahy, JD, PhD**  
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

**Laura McCarthy**, State Forester  
Forestry Division



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 9, 2019**

**Contact:** Wendy Mason 476-3209; [wendy.mason@state.nm.us](mailto:wendy.mason@state.nm.us)

## **New Mexico State Forestry Division & Interagency Partners Kick-Off Wildfire Awareness Week 2019**

**Albuquerque, NM** – At a news conference today, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst, State Forester Laura McCarthy and interagency partners, emphasized the importance of Wildfire Awareness Week, which started April 7th in New Mexico and continues through April 13th, 2019.

Speaking at the Bosque School in Albuquerque, Secretary Propst emphasized the week's theme of, *Prevention today for protection tomorrow*. "Emergency preparedness is a responsibility shared by everyone. We encourage all New Mexicans to be proactive in their communities by preparing their homes, land and businesses now, before wildfire occurs."

"So far this year, 99 percent of the fires we've had (on state and private land) were human caused," said State Forester Laura McCarthy. "You and I can change the pattern of unwanted wildfires by taking steps to educate ourselves and taking precautions."

Since January 1, 2019, 74 wildfires have burned more than 7,000 acres on state and privately-owned land in New Mexico, destroying property and threatening New Mexico's water resources. The considerable risk of wildfire still lies ahead as we move into the warmest months of the year.

McCarthy said, "It may seem like it has snowed and rained a lot this year, but actually, much of New Mexico is still experiencing abnormally dry to severe drought conditions. And as usual, spring is windy – and on dry, windy days even the smallest spark is potentially dangerous."

At today's news conference local, state, and federal agency representatives discussed how residents can best prevent wildfires through community engagement, planning and individual action.

There are some specific steps homeowners and landowners can take to help protect lives, property and valuable resources:

- Create and maintain a minimum 30-foot defensible space around your home;
- Cut tall grass around your property;
- Pile firewood and other flammables away from your home and other structures;
- Clear leaves, pine needles and other debris from roofs, gutters and deck areas;
- Prune trees near structures and remove excess ground fuels such as fallen needles, cones and branches;
- Take precautions when burning debris or using equipment and never leave a fire unattended;
- Follow burn restrictions and wind warnings – always check the weather;

While enjoying New Mexico's many forested private and public lands, it is suggested that residents and visitors:

- Build a campfire in established campgrounds with approved fire pits and grills;
- Never leave a campfire unattended; be sure it is dead out and cold to the touch before leaving;
- Never park vehicles in tall grass or shrubs where hot car parts may spark dry vegetation;
- Never toss lit cigarettes or e-cigarettes out of cars and abide by smoking restrictions in forested areas;
- Keep in mind that the use of fireworks is always prohibited on all public lands including state parks or national forests.

For more information on wildfire prevention, how to create defensible space to protect lives and property, log onto: [www.nmforestry.com](http://www.nmforestry.com), <https://nmfireinfo.com/> or [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org). For more information on preparing your homes and families, visit the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's Family Preparedness Guide: [www.nmdhsem.org](http://www.nmdhsem.org) or Ready, Set, Go program at [www.wildlandfirersg.org](http://www.wildlandfirersg.org).



