

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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State Forestry Urges Caution this Winter due to Fire Danger

SANTA FE – Wildfire Danger levels are higher across parts of New Mexico right now, thanks to mild temperatures, dry conditions and gusty winds. The potential for fire is especially high in eastern and southeastern parts of the state where the lack of moisture is drying out fine, grassy fuels, according to New Mexico State Forestry Fire Prevention and Outreach Program Manager Dan Ware.

State Forestry officials are warning residents and visitors to use caution with any use of fire and to do their part in preventing wildfires.

“Since the beginning of the year, we’ve seen a couple of potentially destructive wildfires break out along the Middle Rio Grande Valley and near Silver City in the southwestern part of the state,” said Ware. “With the fire danger even higher in southern and eastern parts of the state, it’s not going to take much for a fire to get going right now.”

Abundant seasonal rainfall during the recent monsoon season caused the rapid growth of grass and brush in New Mexico. With dry conditions across much of the state so far this winter, fuels are drying out and susceptible to fire.

State Forestry officials emphasize the following precautions and measures to help residents and visitors prepare for and prevent wildfires:

- When traveling by auto, only pull over into developed areas, such as rest stops, to prevent heat from catalytic converters or exhaust emissions from sparking fires in roadside grass.
- Never walk away from a burning or smoldering campfire. Use water and dirt to kill the fire. The ground should be cold to the touch before it is safe to leave.
- When starting a campfire, clear debris away from the fire ring and surround the fire with rocks. Keep water nearby.
- Use caution while operating equipment that can throw sparks or use open flames such as grinders and welding torches. Areas near use should be free of flammable debris and tall vegetation.
- If hauling a trailer, make sure chains are not dragging on the pavement to prevent sparks from causing roadside fires.
- Don’t throw burning matches or lit cigarettes to the side of a road or in areas with dry grass or weeds.
- Log onto www.nmforestry.com for more wildfire prevention and preparedness information.

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.

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