
Interagency Fire News



For Immediate Release – April 1, 2013

March 31 – April 6, 2013 Proclaimed Wildfire Awareness Week In New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM – At a news conference held today, Governor Susana Martinez proclaimed March 31 – April 6, 2013 as Wildfire Awareness Week in New Mexico and called upon residents and visitors to the state to continue doing their part to prevent human caused wildfires.

“While the number of human-caused wildfires was down last year, we must not let our guard down in order for this to continue,” said Governor Martinez. “Conditions are in place for another potentially difficult fire season and I urge all New Mexicans to take the responsibility we all have to prevent wildfires very seriously.”

In 2012, New Mexico experienced its largest wildfire in recorded history, the Whitewater Baldy Complex, and the state’s most destructive fire, the Little Bear, which burned more than 250 structures near Ruidoso. For this reason, local, state, federal and tribal interagency partners continue to stress wildfire preparedness and prevention.

At today’s news conference, held at Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, Governor Martinez announced a new pilot program that will hire and train 40 United States military veterans as wildland firefighters. These veterans will be placed on four fire crews that will be available for assignment on wildfires statewide. The new program is a collaborative effort between New Mexico State Forestry, the Department of Veteran’s Services, the Department of Corrections and the New Mexico Workforce Connection.

Today, local, state, federal and tribal agency representatives discussed preparations for the upcoming fire season and how residents can best prevent human caused wildfires and how we must all be prepared.

Since the 2012 fire season, interagency partners have worked to train hundreds of firefighters in wildland fire skills, identify grant funding for equipment and teach landowners how to reduce their wildfire threat through land treatment.

Since January 1, 2013, New Mexico has experienced 59 wildfires on state and privately owned land that have burned approximately 739 acres. Last year at this time, 68 fires burned approximately 2,104 acres.

-more-

Despite this decrease, fire response agencies expect this to be a very active year for wildfire and there are steps state residents and visitors can take to reduce the potential for loss of life and property:

- Create a 30-foot defensible space zone around the home;
- Pile firewood and other flammables well away from home and other structures;
- Keep access roads free of debris and vegetation to improve access and escape in case of fire;
- Clean off needles and other debris from roofs and gutters;
- Consider constructing or renovating with fire resistant building materials;
- Prune trees near structures and remove excess ground fuels such as fallen needles, cones and branches.

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

- Know Before You go: Call the statewide toll-free Fire Restriction Hotline at 1-877-864-6985;
- Build a campfire in areas approved only such as established campgrounds with fire grills pits;
- 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 fires can start because hot catalytic converters may come in contact with dry vegetation;
- Never toss lit cigarettes out of cars;
- 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.nmfireinfo.com or www.firewise.org. For more information on preparing your homes and families, visit the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management's Family Preparedness Guide: <http://goo.gl/Zuams>.

Contact Information:

USDA Forest Service – Karen Takai, PIO, Sandia Ranger District – 505-281-3304
BLM – Claudia Standish – Acting BLM/NM Fire Mitigation & Prevention Specialist – 505-476-4332
NM State Forestry – Dan Ware, Fire Information Officer – 505-476-3336
NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management – PIO – 505-231-7197
BIA – Jose Tenorio – Prevention Forester, Navajo and Southwest Region – 505-563-3375
Albuquerque Fire Department – Melissa Romero PIO – 505-768-9317
Bernalillo Co. Fire Department – Larry Gallegos, PIO – 505-468-1273
MRGCD – Tom Thorpe, PIO – 505-382-9306

#30#