

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Susana Martinez
Governor

Ken McQueen
Cabinet Secretary

Matthias Sayer
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Donald Griego, Acting
Division Director
State Forestry Division



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Contact: Beth Wojahn 476-3226; beth.wojahn@state.nm.us

New Mexico Forestry, Emergency Responders and Partners Warn of High-Risk Fire Danger

State, federal officials encourage increased fire awareness and prevention

Santa Fe, NM – Today, New Mexico Forestry, emergency managers, and their partners warned that the state will see increased fire danger over the weekend. Just two days ago, red flag warnings were issued throughout Eastern New Mexico for extreme fire danger. So far this year, New Mexico has already seen 55 wildfires burn 6,832 acres with 3,264 acres burned in the last two weeks alone.

“Last year’s wildfire season was very active and destructive,” said Acting State Forester Donald Griego. “The Doghead Fire alone burned a total 17,882 acres, causing evacuations, consuming 24 primary dwellings and threatening 21 other structures. This year, the dry weather, tall grasses and strong winds are an indication that wildfire season has begun in NM.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service warn that New Mexico will see elevated threat conditions for fires this weekend. Surrounding states like Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and others have already been hit with serious wildfires this year due to similarly dangerous conditions.

“To protect of lives and property throughout the state, we are asking local leaders to take an earlier-than-usual look at their local fire restriction measures,” said New Mexico Department of Homeland Security Cabinet Secretary Jay Mitchell. “Local governments and first responders need to strongly consider appropriate preventative measures given the existing and forecasted increased threat of wildfires.”

Families and communities can take steps to reduce the potential for loss of life and property due to wildfires, which include:

- 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;
- Remove 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; and
- Participate in programs such as “Firewise Communities USA,” “Ready, Set, Go!” and “Fire Adapted Communities.”

When enjoying New Mexico’s many forested private and public lands, it is suggested that residents and visitors alike use the following tips:

- Know Before You Go: Call the statewide toll-free Fire Restriction Hotline at 1-877-864-6985 or log onto www.nmfireinfo.com for a link to an active fire restriction map:
- Build a campfire in areas approved only—such as established campgrounds with fire grills or 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 all smoking and fire restrictions on public and private lands; and
- Keep in mind that the use of fireworks is always prohibited on all public lands including state parks and national forests.

More than 130,979 acres burned on public and private lands in 2016. The Timberon Fire burned 290 acres, consuming a total of 70 structures, including 44 homes. Interagency partners continually train hundreds of firefighters in wildfire fighting skills, identify grant funding for equipment, and teach landowners how to reduce the fire threat on their property by thinning over-abundant vegetation.

For more information on active wildfire, wildfire prevention tips and programs and how to create defensible space to protect lives and property, log onto: <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/>, www.nmfireinfo.com, <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov> 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.

The New Mexico Department of Health suggests New Mexicans use the 5-3-1 Mile Visibility Method to decide when it’s safe to be outside. The New Mexico Environmental Public Health Tracking website provides information on smoke safety and how to avoid breathing in smoke at <https://nmtracking.org/fire>.

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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.

220 South St. Francis Drive • Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
Phone (505) 476-3325 • Fax (505) 476-3330 • www.emnrd.state.nm.us/fd