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**Laura McCarthy**, Forestry Division Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**New Mexico Wildfire Awareness Week Dedicated  
to Preparedness and Prevention**

**SANTA FE, NM** – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham proclaims March 28 through April 3, 2021, as Wildfire Awareness Week in New Mexico. The risk for catastrophic wildfires is exceptionally high due to significant drought across New Mexico and the Southwest. The [Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Forestry Division](#) is joining its local, state, federal, and tribal partners in encouraging New Mexicans to remember that wildfire preparedness is year-round and it's everyone's responsibility to prevent human-caused wildfires.

Approximately 80 wildfires have burned more than 2,000 acres of state and private land since January 1 of this year in New Mexico. A majority of those fires were caused by people and could have been avoided by carefully observing basic precautions.

"Hotter and drier conditions from climate change have created a drought-stricken environment in our state that can fuel stronger, more frequent fires that threaten lives and property," said State Forester Laura McCarthy. "We need residents and visitors to do their part and take steps to prevent unwanted wildfires from starting all year long."

There are many ways the public can help prevent wildfires and protect communities.

- Recreate responsibly by following local fire restrictions, ensuring campfires are out cold, securing tow chains on trailers and RV's so they don't drag and keep spark arrestors in proper working order on off-road vehicles.

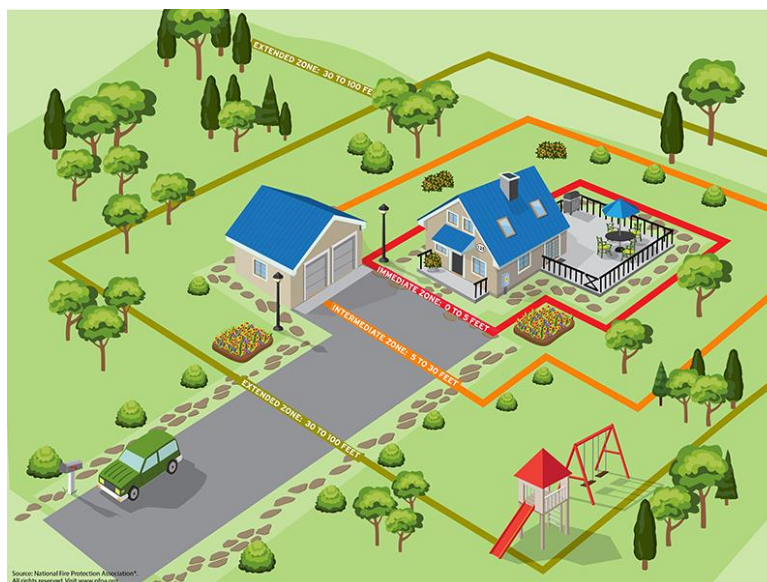
- Stay fire safe around your home and workplace when using equipment that could cause a spark. When working outside have a shovel, water, or fire extinguisher nearby to quickly put out flames from sparks that could catch dry grass and other flammable materials on fire.
- Never toss cigarettes, matches, or other smoking materials from moving vehicles. Dry grass along roadsides can easily ignite within minutes.
- Follow local ordinances when burning yard waste and do not burn debris or weeds on windy days. Keep a shovel, water, or fire extinguisher on hand to keep fires in check.

As part of this year's theme, wildfire preparedness is year-round, the Forestry Division is also encouraging residents to work with their local [Forestry districts](#) and fire departments to learn how to become a Fire Adapted Community.

The primary threats to homes during a wildfire are embers and small flames. Wind can carry small pieces of burning debris (embers) more than a mile from a wildfire igniting spot fires, homes, and other flammable objects. Understanding and maintaining the [Home Ignition Zone](#) is the best way to withstand the threat of wildfire.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Home Ignition Zone includes three specific areas:

- The immediate zone – is the area within five feet of your home where embers are most likely to settle and ignite structures.
- The intermediate zone – is the area within 5-30 feet of your home where fire resistant landscaping and creating breaks can help decrease fire behavior.
- The extended zone – is the area within 30-100 feet of your home where clearing ladder fuels can help keep flames on the ground and out of the treetops.



Home Ignition Zone courtesy [NFPA.org](https://www.nfpa.org)

“Taking precautionary steps now like pruning trees and shrubs, clearing rain gutters, roofs, and decks of dead leaves or pine needles, and removing flammable debris from yards could mean the difference between losing your home or saving it,” McCarthy said.

The following links provide more information on what to do before, during, and after a wildfire.



<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/>



<https://www.nfpa.org/>



<https://facnm.org/>



**AFTER WILDFIRE**

A GUIDE FOR NEW MEXICO COMMUNITIES

<https://afterwildfirenm.org/>



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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.*

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us>