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NM Forestry Division and partners kick off Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week

A “time for action” to reduce wildfires

Santa Fe, NM – Over the last five years, wildfires have annually burned over 100,000 acres in New Mexico. And every year, humans continue to cause more than half of these fires. The keys to preventing human-caused wildfire lie in two areas: [education and risk-reduction](#).

To educate the public and help landowners and communities reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire damage, the New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s (EMNRD) Forestry Division and its fire prevention partners in the southwest are kicking off **Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week**, March 25-30.

Focused on the theme of “**Time for Action**,” this social media-driven campaign provides a way to amplify wildfire prevention messaging prior to the start of the state’s critical wildfire period. The Forestry Division will post public service announcements and other messages through its [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) channels. The division encourages the public to share these messages with friends and family and on their own social media feeds, thus amplifying this critical information across the state.

The messaging will include ways to increase defensible space around the home; how to prevent fires when camping or recreating; the science of ember-born fire spread; and how to engage your community or neighborhood to prepare for wildfire.

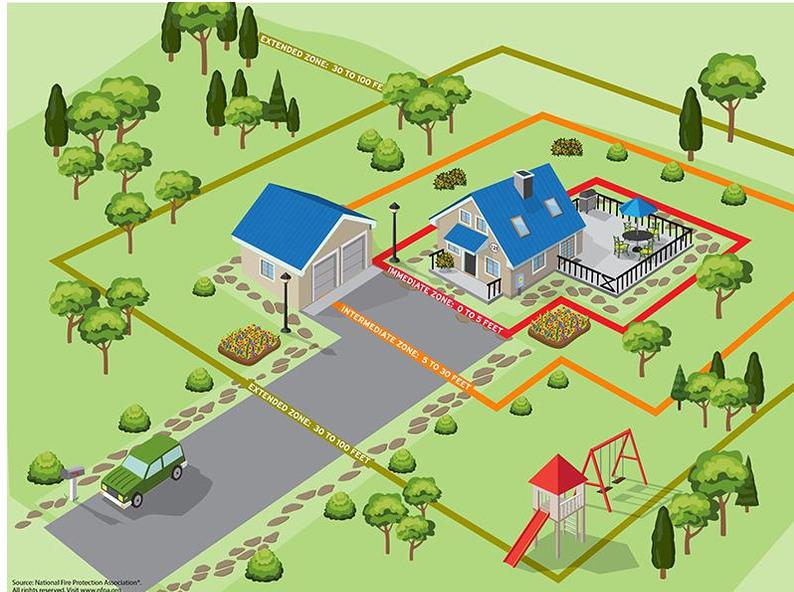
“Unfortunately, wildfires in New Mexico have truly become an ever-present phenomenon,” said Dylan Fuge, EMNRD Deputy Secretary. “Our warmer, drier climate increases the risk posed by careless actions that generate a spark that activates fire on landscapes poised to burn at more intensely.

“While the State and its partners work on multiple large-scale fire prevention projects each year to minimize wildfire risk statewide, it’s important that landowners, homeowners, and visitors also do their part by being responsible stewards of the land, said Laura McCarthy, State Forester. “That responsibility starts with educating yourself on wildfire preparedness.”

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

- Understanding the threat burning embers pose in the “[ignition zone](#)” around your home (see photo below)
- Create defensible space by clearing gutters, window and door ledges, and keeping vegetation at least ten feet away from your home.

- Recreate responsibly by following local fire restrictions, ensuring campfires are out cold, securing tow chains on trailers and RVs so they don't drag, and keeping spark arrestors in proper working order on off-road vehicles.
- Stay fire safe when using equipment outside that could cause a spark. When working outside with metal or wood or mechanized tools, 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.



This illustration shows the “ignition zones” around a home through which burning embers could spread fire
(Photo courtesy nfpa.org)

“Last year’s fire season was relatively quiet,” said Lindsey Quam, Forestry Division Deputy Director. “And while that’s a great thing for residents and firefighters, it doesn’t mean we can just let our guard down this year. Planning for a worst-case scenario around your home is your best opportunity to ensure that scenario doesn’t come to pass.”

The Forestry Division encourages residents to work with its six [local districts](#) across the state or their local fire department to learn more. For daily updates, follow the Division’s [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

This year, Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week runs March 25 – 30, and is a joint collaboration between the NM Forestry Division, the Bureau of Land Management, the USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, and the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management. The following links also provide information on what to do before, during, and after a wildfire:



emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/fire-prevention-programs



facnm.org



AFTER WILDFIRE

A GUIDE FOR NEW MEXICO COMMUNITIES

afterwildfirenm.org

Link to this press release [here](#).

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