



New Mexico Department of Agriculture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Wildfire Awareness Month is reminder for New Mexicans to stay vigilant

Be prepared for wildfires year-round

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LAS CRUCES, N.M. – New Mexicans – including farmers and ranchers – are encouraged to be prepared and learn about reducing wildfire risks. May is National Wildfire Awareness Month, which sheds light on the importance of communities coming together to take action to raise awareness and reduce wildfire risks. Peak fire season in New Mexico typically begins in early May and runs through June, although the state can experience fire danger throughout the year.

According to the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture, New Mexico has 20,900 farms and ranches. As of 2023, farms operate on over 39 million acres of land in the state. It is vital that farmers and ranchers be prepared for wildfires.

“We need to remain vigilant and do our part to mitigate fire-related disasters,” said New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. “Dry and windy conditions so far this spring have increased above-normal fire potential in parts of the state as we move towards the summer season. With much of this year’s wildfire season still ahead of us, I encourage farmers and ranchers, and all New Mexicans, to learn about creating ‘defensible space’ and following other fire safety protocols that can protect land, livestock and homes,” said Witte.

The New Mexico State University College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences has [recorded webinars and other resources available on its website](#) to help people learn how to be prepared. These resources include the following:

- Wildfire evacuation checklist.
- Emergency notification systems listed by New Mexico counties.
- Guide to staying safe during wildfire.
- “Wildfire! You have 5 minutes to evacuate” webinar.
- “Proactive steps for wildfire evacuation” webinar.
- “Wildfire – Proactive steps to safeguard your home, yard and neighborhood” webinar.
- “Wildfire – Proactive steps to safeguard the farm and ranch” webinar.

“Wildfire evacuations are stressful,” said Doug Cram, NMSU Extension Forest and Fire Specialist. “Check out our proactive steps to improve outcomes and reduce anxiety. Also, it’s not just forested environments that are impacted. Rangelands, woodlands, bosques and urban environments can also be impacted by wildfire this season. We encourage all New Mexicans to take proactive steps to be prepared for wildfire, rather than relying primarily on first responders. These steps are proven to mitigate fire behavior and improve outcomes.”

This year’s Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week (March 25-30) theme, “time for action,” is a reminder to amplify wildfire prevention ahead of wildfire season. May 4 was Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, which is a national campaign that encourages people and organizations everywhere to come together on a single day to take action to raise awareness and reduce wildfire risks.

“So many residents of New Mexico live within fire-prone areas that increasing your defensible space is not just a 'should do' it’s a 'must-do,’” said State Forester Laura McCarthy. “Protecting your home and property from wildfire is vital year-round, but especially during summer months.”

The primary threat to homes during a wildfire are embers, in addition to direct flames and radiant heat. Embers are small pieces of burning debris that can be carried more than a mile from a wildfire by the wind. Understanding and maintaining a [defensible space](#) is the best way to withstand the threat of an ember storm.

For information about current fires, smoke activity and evacuations, visit the [New Mexico Fire Information website](#). For the latest information on current fire restrictions in New Mexico and the southwest region, visit the [New Mexico Forestry Division - EMNRD website](#).

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Cutline: New Mexicans – including farmers and ranchers – are encouraged to be prepared and learn about reducing wildfire risks. May is National Wildfire Awareness Month, which sheds light on the importance of communities coming together take action to raise awareness and reduce wildfire risks. (Photo by Jami Gonzales)