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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Forestry Division launches Wildfire Awareness Week**  
*Goal: reduce human-caused wildfires in New Mexico*

**SANTA FE** – The New Mexico [Forestry Division](#) is launching a media campaign to encourage New Mexico residents to help prevent wildfires.

The campaign, running the week of March 24 in recognition of the Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week, is built on the theme “Spark Safety not Wildfires.”

“Living in New Mexico, or anywhere in the southwest, means learning to live with fire,” said **EMNRD Secretary Melanie Kenderdine**. “Individual and community awareness of this fact helps decrease all our risk from future wildfires.”

The campaign will remind the public that:

- Humans cause four out of every five wildfires in our state.
- There are concrete steps we can all take to lower the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

“The dry conditions and lack of snowpack over the winter point towards what could be a very bad fire season this year,” said **State Forester Laura McCarthy**. “We’ve already seen *twice* the amount of fire starts this year over this month last year. We all need to be extra cautious on days when it’s hot, windy and dry. A small mistake can have huge consequences.”

The Forestry Division will repeat that message via social media posts throughout the week. The division also has worked with KOAT-TV in Albuquerque to produce a series of video segments advising homeowners how to protect themselves and their property from potential wildfires. Those segments are expected to run during the station’s news broadcasts and include:

- Building defensible space around your home.
- How to pack a “go-bag” for evacuations.

- An interview with Zander Evans, executive director for the [Forest Stewards Guild](#), on human-caused wildfires in the southwest.

The top three ways humans cause wildfires in New Mexico, and some ways prevent their occurrence:

**1. Debris and open burning:**

- Contact your local fire authority before burning.
- Create fuel breaks around burn areas.
- Have a water source, hose, and shovel readily available.
- Never burn during high winds or hot, dry afternoons.
- Monitor constantly during burning.
- Make sure fires are completely out – cold to the touch.

**2. Campfire and outdoor recreation:**

- Check fire restrictions before heading out.
- Pack extra water, shovel, and fire extinguisher.
- Clear debris down to mineral soil for campfires.
- Never leave fires unattended.
- Properly extinguish campfires – drown, stir, feel for heat, repeat until cold.
- Consider alternatives like maintained camp stoves or propane fire rings.

**3. Equipment and vehicle use – including hot engines, dragging chains, and "hot work" activities like welding and grinding**

- Work early mornings when temperatures are cooler.
- Check for red flag warnings before outdoor work.
- Maintain spark arrestors on equipment.
- Clear work areas of debris.
- Secure tow chains when traveling.
- Never park your car over dry grass.
- Check for dragging vehicle parts.

This year, Southwest Wildfire Awareness Week, March 24 – 30, is a collaboration between the New Mexico 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](http://emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/fire-prevention-programs)

-  [nfpa.org](https://www.nfpa.org)

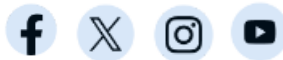
-  [facnm.org](https://www.facnm.org)

Link to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s Wildfire Awareness Week proclamation [here](#).

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



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