

# Ready, Set, Go!

YOUR PERSONAL WILDLAND FIRE ACTION GUIDE

NEW MEXICO



# Ready, Set, Go!



## Saving Lives and Property through Advance Planning

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To learn more about the Ready, Set, Go! Program and its partners, visit [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org).

In New Mexico, fire season is now a year-round reality in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfires. The tips in the following pages are designed to help you plan and prepare for a wildfire emergency.

Each year, wildfires threaten to consume hundreds of homes in the state. Studies show that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildfires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildfire related deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their homes.

Local, state, federal, and tribal fire response agencies prepare throughout the year to help protect you and your property from wildfire. However, the reality is that in a fire event, there may simply not be enough fire resources or firefighters to defend every home. By taking personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family, and your property, you will be better prepared, increasing your personal safety and your home's chance of surviving a wildfire.

In this Action Guide, we provide the tips and tools you need to prepare for a wildfire emergency and create a personal action plan. The Ready, Set, Go! Program works in collaboration with New Mexico's Living with Fire and other existing community wildland fire education efforts such as New Mexico Fire Adapted Communities and Firewise. See the back of this Action Guide for links.

Many residents have built homes and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire can have on them, and few have adequately prepared for a quick evacuation in the event of a fire.

***It's not a question of if, but when, the next major wildfire will occur in New Mexico.***

Fire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence. Hills, grasslands, canyons, and forests burned periodically long before homes were built. Wildfires are fueled by dry vegetation and driven by seasonal hot, dry winds, which are extremely dangerous and difficult to control.

By creating your own action plan, you will be better prepared to react quickly and safely during a wildfire emergency.





## Living in a Wildland-Urban Area and Ember Zone

*Ready, Set, Go!*

begins with a house that can survive a wildfire.

### Home Ignition Zone

If you live next to a natural vegetation area, you should provide firefighters with the space they need to protect your home. Create a buffer zone by removing weeds, brush, and other vegetation. This helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk from flying embers. Fire preparedness education programs provide valuable guidance on property enhancements.

### Wildfire Embers Can Travel Over One Mile

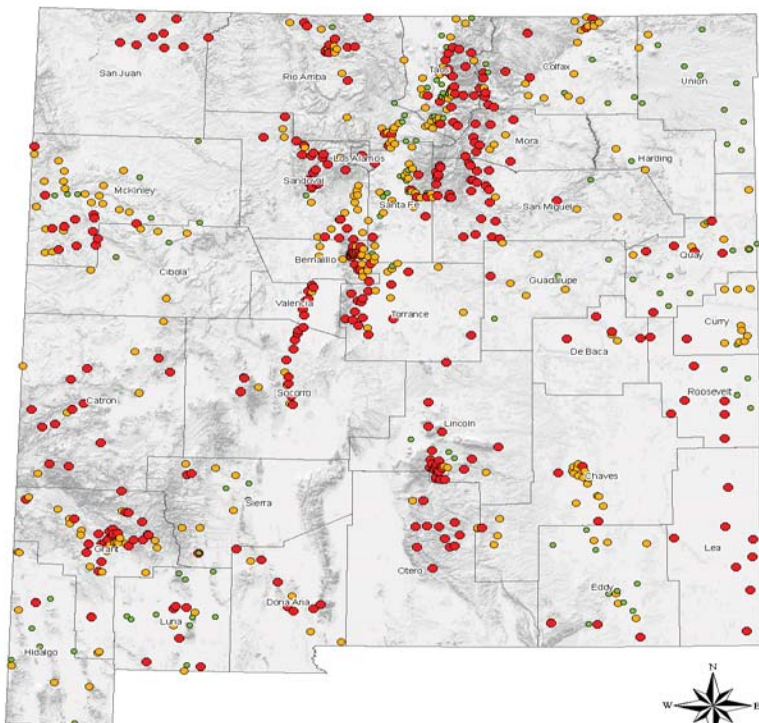
A home within one mile of a natural area is considered a part of an ember zone, where wind-driven embers can be a risk to your property. You and your home must be prepared well before a fire occurs. Ember fires can destroy homes or neighborhoods far from the actual front of the fire.

### Consider This

Flammable vegetation between and around homes and outbuildings increases the risk of wildfire spreading throughout the community, endangering lives and property. Pre-fire planning, vegetation management, and sufficient breaks in vegetation allow firefighters an opportunity to keep fire from entering the community.



2016 New Mexico Communities at Risk



#### Communities at Risk

- Low
- Medium
- High

0 20 40 80 120 160 Miles



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WILDLAND FIRE ACTION GUIDE

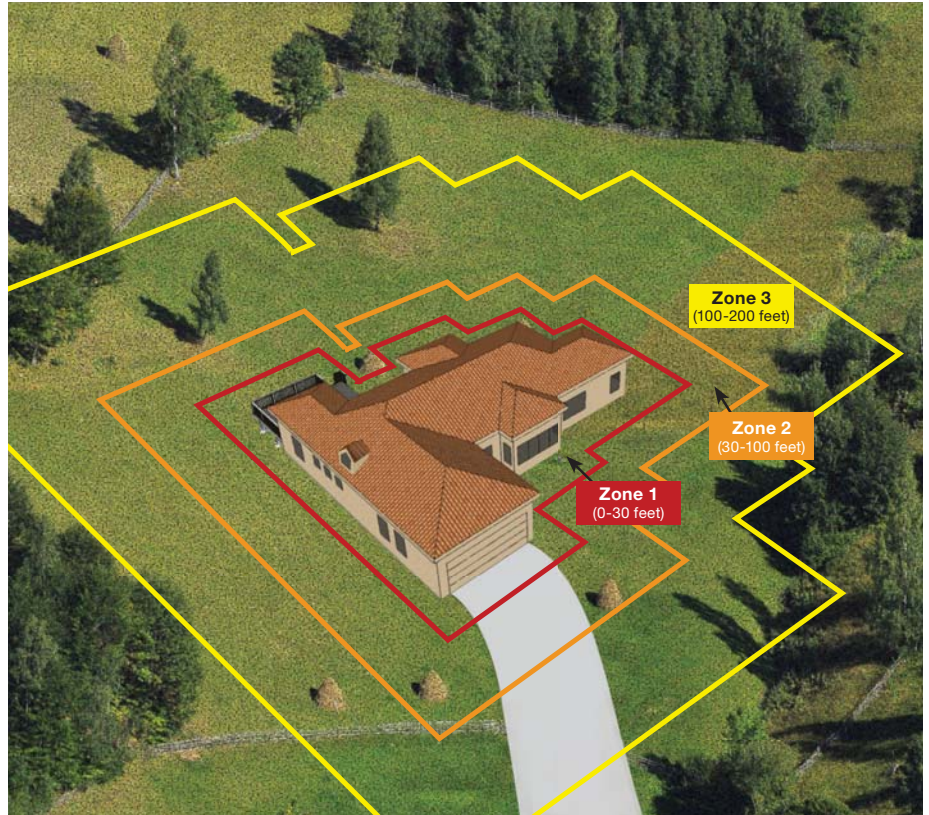
# Protect Your Home

Protecting your home begins with creating a buffer between the structure and the wildland area that, under normal conditions, is designed to slow or halt the spread of fire to a structure.

This space protects your home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. It also gives firefighters a safer place from which to work. You can begin by removing flammable weeds, brush, and other vegetation from around your property.

To help your home survive a wildfire, create three zones around your home; Zone 1: 0-30 feet, Zone 2: 30-100 feet, and Zone 3: 100-200 feet.

Follow the advice under each zone to help protect your home. More information on creating defensible space can be found in the New Mexico Living with Fire guide, <https://nmfireinfo.com/information/>.



## ZONE 1

### 0-30 feet around your home or to property line

- Use hard surfaces and noncombustibles, such as concrete or gravel, 0-5 feet around home.
- Use non-woody, low-growing herbaceous vegetation. Succulent plants and ground covers are good choices.
- Store firewood and other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your home, garage, or attached deck.
- In fire season, trim back touching or over-hanging branches from the roof to a distance of at least 10 feet.

## ZONE 2

### 30-100 feet around your home or to property line

- Create vegetation groups, "islands," to break up continuous fuels around your home.
- Remove ladder fuels to create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing trees.
- Remove leaf and needle debris from the yard.
- Keep grass and wildflowers under 8 inches in height.

## ZONE 3

### 100-200 feet around your home or to property line

- Create and maintain a minimum of 10 feet between the tops of trees.
- Remove ladder fuels, creating a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing up trees.
- Remove dead trees and shrubs.

## Ladder Fuels

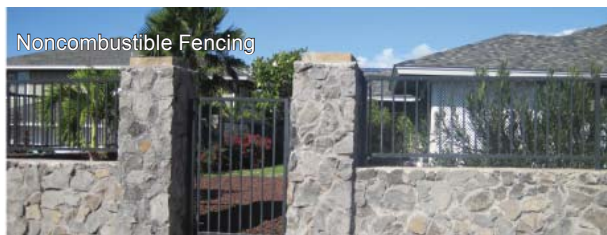
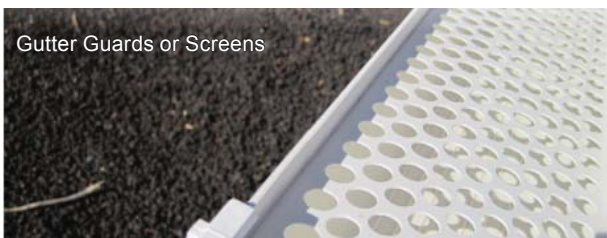
Ladder fuels allow the fire to climb from the surface fuels into the upper portion of the tree. They can be eliminated by increasing horizontal and vertical separation between vegetation.



# Making Your Home Fire Resistant – Harden Your Home

Construction materials and the quality of the defensible space surrounding the structure are what increases the chance of survival in a wildland fire. Embers from a wildland fire will find the weak spot in your home's fire protection scheme and can easily catch because of small, overlooked, or seemingly inconsequential factors. Below are some measures you can take to safeguard your home.

## Home Improvements to Resist Ember Attack



### BALCONIES and DECKS

Embers can collect in or on combustible surfaces, or beneath decks and balconies, igniting the material and entering the home through walls or windows.

To harden your home even further, consider protecting your home with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by an ember that enters your home, a sprinkler system can help protect you and your family year-round from any home fire.

### ROOFS

Roofs are the most vulnerable surface where embers land because they become lodged and can start a fire. Roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, and rain gutters are all points of entry.

### EAVES

Embers can gather under open eaves and ignite combustible material.

### VENTS

Embers can enter the attic or other concealed spaces and ignite combustible materials. Vents in eaves and cornices are particularly vulnerable, as are any unscreened vents.

### WALLS and FENCING

Combustible siding or other combustible/overlapping materials provide surfaces and crevices for embers to nestle and ignite. Combustible fencing can become engulfed, and if attached to the home's sidings can carry the fire right to the home.

### WINDOWS and DOORS

Embers can enter gaps in doors, including garage doors. Plants or combustible storage near windows can be ignited from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames.

# Ready, Set, Go!

## Create Your Own Action Guide

Now that you have done everything you can to prepare your home, it is time to prepare your family. Your Wildland Fire Action Guide must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire. Use these checklists to help you prepare and gain situational awareness in the threat of wildland fire. More information can be found on the last page of this guide.

### Ready – Get Ready

- Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly. Include the evacuation of large animals, such as horses, in your plan.
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and teach your family how to use them.
- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- Plan and practice several different evacuation routes.
- Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle.
- Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers in your emergency supply kit.
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire and weather emergency announcements.



## Set – Be Prepared

- Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. See <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/> and <https://nmfireinfo.com/>. Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates.
- Alert family and neighbors.
- Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- Ensure that you have your emergency supply kit on hand that includes all necessary items, such as a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and a lot of drinking water.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water, and ensure your family and pets are accounted for until you are ready to leave.

### INSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- Close all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- Remove all shades and curtains from windows.
- Move furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Turn off pilot lights and air conditioning.
- Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.

### OUTSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- Bring combustible items from the exterior of the house inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.) If you have a pool, place combustible items in the water.
- Turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running. They can effect critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Back your car into the driveway to facilitate a quick departure. Shut doors and roll up windows.

- Have a ladder available.
- Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires until you leave.
- Cover attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals if time permits.

### EMERGENCY SUPPLIES LIST

The NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management recommends every family have 3 types of emergency supply kits assembled long before a wildfire or other emergency: 1 kit at home, 1 kit in the car, and 1 kit per individual that is portable.

- Each kit should have a 3-day supply of water (1 gallon per person, per day) and non-perishable food (3-day supply).
- First aid kit and sanitation supplies.
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, and cash.
- Extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, prescriptions, and medications.
- Important family documents and contact numbers, including insurance documents and proof of residence, such as a utility bill driver's license address it not current (to get back in, if needed, during incident while evacuation is in effect).
- Easily carried valuables and irreplaceable items.
- Personal electronic devices and chargers.
- Note: Keep a pair of comfortable shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

[www.ready.gov/build-a-kit](http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit)

## Go! – Act Early

By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment.

### WHEN TO LEAVE

Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate!

### WHERE TO GO

Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

### HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles. Choose the safest route away from the fire.

### WHAT TO TAKE

Take your emergency supply kit containing your family and pet's necessary items.

### If You Are Trapped: Survival Tips

- Stay in your home until the fire passes. Shelter away from outside walls.
- Bring garden hoses inside house so embers and flames do not destroy them.
- Look for spot fires and extinguish if found inside house.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- Stay hydrated.
- Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside).
- Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers. Check the attic as well.
- If there are fires that you cannot extinguish, call 9-1-1.



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# Ranches and Farms

Ranches, farms, and other rural areas have different needs than purely residential areas in the wildlands. In addition to protecting your family and property, livelihoods, including livestock, crops, and equipment, may be at stake. Additional planning and action is necessary for their protection.

## Ready!

### Communicate with fire personnel before season begins.

- Discuss firefighting on your property, including hazards, water and firebreak locations, and other concerns.

### Prepare your livestock or large animals.

- Have an evacuation and relocation plan.
- Ensure proper registration and branding.
- Have a contingency plan for feeding the animals if grazing land is destroyed.

### Prepare your property.

- Ensure roads are clearly marked.
- Establish and maintain firebreaks around pastures, structures, and crops.
- Keep equipment in areas clear of vegetation.
- Clearly mark water tanks, ponds, and other water supplies available for fire department use.
- Reinforce bridges to ensure fire engines or bulldozers are supported.
- Properly mark all storage areas used for chemicals.

### Prepare your family and workers.

- Create an evacuation plan.
- Have emergency supply kits on hand.
- Know evacuation routes.



## Set!

- Unlock gates so fire crews can get in.
- Shut off propane tanks or gas lines.
- Move equipment or vehicles into areas clear of flammable vegetation.



## Go!

- Evacuate animals.
- Open gates so livestock can escape the flames if needed.
- Leave early enough to avoid being caught in the fire.
- Contact county animal services for assistance.

### IF YOU CANNOT EVACUATE YOUR ANIMALS

- Move livestock and horses to a safe area, such as recently grazed or mown pasture, riding arena, or irrigated pasture. Never release them onto streets and roads. Provide at least enough feed and water for 48 hours.
- Notify fire agency personnel of location and number of livestock.
- Notify county animal services about animals you could not evacuate.



### IF YOU ARE TRAPPED OR UNABLE TO EVACUATE

- Call 9-1-1 immediately.
- Bring pets indoors. Do not leave pets tethered outdoors.
- Wear long sleeves and pants made of natural fibers, such as cotton. Boots, gloves, hats, goggles, and bandanas are also helpful against smoke and embers.
- Stay hydrated.
- Patrol your property for fires.
- Take refuge inside a structure, away from outside walls.
- Fill sinks and tubs with water.
- Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- Once the fire has passed, check around your house, in your attic, and in your crawlspace for burning embers and extinguish them.

**Y**our knowledge can be helpful to fire crews who may not be familiar with the area. Offer knowledge of access roads, location of structures, location of water sources, fence lines, and geography.

Communicate where your livestock or other animals are located. Ask questions, offer assistance, give permission. Be patient and understand there are many moving parts to a fire operation.

Firefighters and landowners have the same goals when a fire occurs - to protect lives, property, and livelihoods. By offering your knowledge and communicating with fire operations, fire crews can effectively and efficiently protect what is most important.

### IF CAUGHT IN THE OPEN

The best temporary shelter is in a sparse fuel area. Avoid canyons, natural “chimneys”, saddles, or on a steep mountainside, fires run uphill very quickly.

If a road is nearby, lie face down along the road cut or in a ditch. Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the fire’s heat. Be sure to cover your head. Protect your lungs from smoke and intense heat.

# My Personal Wildland Fire ACTION PLAN

Write up your Wildland Fire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

During high-fire-danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildland fire.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Out-of-Area Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## EVACUATION ROUTES

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

## WHERE TO GO

**READY, SET, GO!**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## LOCATION OF EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT(S)

\_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact your local fire department for more tips to prepare before a wildland fire.



# My Personal WildlandFire ACTION PLAN

## Wildfire Preparedness Resources

Call 911 to report a wildfire

New Mexico Fire Information Updates:

<https://nmfireinfo.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/nmfireinfo>

[@NMFireInfo](#)

After Wildfire:

[www.afterwildfirenm.org](http://www.afterwildfirenm.org)

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in New Mexico

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

New Mexico Association of Counties - Wildfire Risk Reduction Program for Rural Communities:

[www.nmcounties.org/homepage/local-state-and-federal-collaboration/fire/](http://www.nmcounties.org/homepage/local-state-and-federal-collaboration/fire/)

New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management:

[www.nmdhsem.org/wildfire-preparedness.aspx](http://www.nmdhsem.org/wildfire-preparedness.aspx)

New Mexico Living with Fire Guide to Prepare your Home to Survive a Wildfire:

<https://nmfireinfo.com/information/>

- *Please scroll down the page to access the guide.*

American Red Cross:

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Fire Adapted Communities:

<http://www.fireadaptednm.org/>

Home Hazard Assessment:

<http://forestguild.org/publications/research/2017/HomeAssessmentGuideSW.pdf>

## Ready, Set, Go!

[www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org)



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