



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Melissa Gutierrez  
Email: [Melissa.gutierrez@state.nm.us](mailto:Melissa.gutierrez@state.nm.us)

## SUPERINTENDENT OF INSURANCE REMINDS NEW MEXICANS TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRES

New Mexico Superintendent of Insurance Russell Toal is reminding New Mexicans that the wildfire season is upon us. We all need to do our part to minimize the risk of wildfires. This is the time to make sure your insurance is sufficient and up-to-date, to prepare your property, practice fire prevention and have a plan if evacuation is necessary.

### INSURANCE

Your homeowners or renters insurance policy should be reviewed now to ensure that you have adequate **coverage for your property and personal belongings**. You can use the NAIC's [Consumer's Guide to Home Insurance](#) or [Guide to Renter's Insurance](#) to help make decisions about which policy works best for you. We also encourage you to contact your insurance broker or agent if you have any questions or need to update your policy.

Filing a claim and replacing all belongs will be easier if you have a home inventory. We encourage you to take photos or a video of each room and of important or expensive items, as this will help your insurer quickly process a claim. You can save these videos or photos to the cloud for easy retrieval.

### DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND FIRE-RESISTANT MATERIALS

Your goal now, before a fire happens, is to make your home or business and the surrounding area more resistant to catching fire and burning. This means reducing the amount of material that can burn easily in and around your home or business by clearing away debris and other flammable materials, moving firewood away from your home and any other structures and using fire-resistant materials for landscaping and construction.



*Example:* If a five-foot shrub is growing near a tree, you need 15 feet of clearance between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branch. Your clearance should be three times the height of the shrub. (Courtesy [readyforwildfire.org](http://readyforwildfire.org))

## Practice fire prevention

- Use caution any time you use fire. Dispose of charcoal briquettes and fireplace ashes properly, never leave any outdoor fire unattended, and make sure that outdoor fires are fully extinguished and cold to the touch before leaving the area.
- Do not use welders or any equipment that creates sparks outside on dry, windy days.
- Do not park vehicles in tall, dry grass if a fire weather watch or fire weather/red flag warning has been issued. Exhaust systems are very hot and can ignite dry grass.
- Store combustible or flammable materials in approved safety containers away from the house.
- Keep a gas grill and propane tank at least 15 feet away from any structure. Clear a 15-foot area around the grill. Do not use the grill during potentially dangerous fire weather conditions.
- Always have a fire extinguisher and functional water hose nearby.
- Learn how you and your family can prevent a wildfire by using fire and equipment responsibly at [www.SmokeyBear.com](http://www.SmokeyBear.com).

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION

To ensure you will be able to act quickly should you need to evacuate, you need to plan. Prepare and regularly review your evacuation plan, share it with family and friends, and be sure to have emergency contact numbers readily available to you.

[Evacuation routes; plan your transportation and a place to stay.](#)

- **Know your community's local evacuation plan and identify several** escape routes from your location in case roads are blocked. Include plans to evacuate people with disabilities and others with access or functional needs, as well as pets, service animals, and livestock.
  - If you will evacuate by car, keep your car fueled and in good condition.
  - If you will need to share transportation, make arrangements now. If you will need to use public transportation, including paratransit, contact your local government emergency management agency to ask how an evacuation will work, how you will get current information during an evacuation, the location of staging areas, and other information.
  - If you need to relocate for an extended period of time, identify a place away from home where you could go if you had to leave. Consider family or friends who live outside of the local area.
  - If you expect to go to a shelter after evacuating, download the American Red Cross Shelter Finder App at [www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/shelter-finder-app](http://www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/shelter-finder-app). This app displays a map of all open American Red Cross shelters and provides the capacity and the current population of each shelter. You can also text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area.
  - Have a Battery-Powered Weather Radio available. If electricity is out and cell towers are down, this will be your only way to know what is happening.

## Essential items for an emergency supply kit:

- Cash: **If the power goes out, credit cards won't work. Keep** some cash on hand for replenishing supplies.
- Medications: Pharmacies might be closed, and hospitals could be overwhelmed. Keep a **backup supply (at least several days' worth) of important medications** like blood pressure medicine and insulin.
- A Gallon of Water for Every Family Member and Pet: Widespread power outages could make tap water unsafe to drink.
- Important Documents: **Social Security cards, passports, birth certificates, driver's licenses** and more could all be lost or destroyed in a fire. Keep copies of these documents in a fireproof container and make it part of your emergency supply kit. Include a copy of your insurance policy so that you can quickly file a claim once the danger has passed.
- A Change of Clothes: If you are away from your home for a few days, you will want to have a change of clothes.

Always keep a good pair of shoes and a flashlight near your bed and handy in the event of a sudden evacuation at night.

Please visit ["Ready, Set, Go!"](#) for additional information and resources. Taking action now can prevent a catastrophe later!

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