

For Immediate Release
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Lt. Governor, Mayors Meet on Fire Safety

Santa Fe - Lt. Governor Diane D. Denish met today with representatives from about 25 New Mexico cities and towns to discuss plans for fireworks bans in times of drought and fire emergency. (Full listing of those in attendance below.)

The following is Lt. Governor Diane D. Denish's statement at her meeting with the Mayors of New Mexico:

"I called the mayors of New Mexico here today to discuss fire safety this upcoming Fourth of July weekend and to get their input about how we empower both cities and state government to ban fireworks in times of drought and emergency.

Last week, Governor Bill Richardson instituted a fireworks ban on state land.

The governor asked me to push fireworks bans throughout the cities of New Mexico and what we learned in trying to accomplish that truly opened our eyes.

It turns out cities and counties are often handcuffed when it comes to imposing common-sense fireworks policies on their lands. According to state law, cities and counties must pass local restrictions 20 days before the Fourth of July to effectively impose a ban on their lands.

Further, the governor has no power to restrict fireworks except on state land.

This is unacceptable.

We are not here today to attack the fireworks industry, which employs New Mexicans throughout the state.

What we are here to do is talk about ways in which the state and cities can respond when circumstances are dire.

The governor and I recognize that this is not a one-size-fits-all state and there are no one-size-fits all solutions. The east side has received a lot of rain this year and it might not make sense for an east side community such as Roswell or my hometown of Hobbs to institute a fireworks ban.

However, Silver City and much of the West side of the state are dry as a tinderbox and our great cities of the North - Taos, Los Alamos, Espanola, Las Vegas and Santa Fe - are in wooded areas that, in times of drought, could become infernos at the drop of a hat.

It is my recommendation to the governor that we revisit our fireworks statutes to allow mayors and the governor to have more flexibility in imposing fireworks bans should the need arise. This is about flexibility. It's about the state and cities needing the power to be responsive to their communities and having the power to act inside that 20-day window.

For this year, I am asking the people of New Mexico - particularly if you live in areas prone to fire - to avoid using personal fireworks this Fourth of July. There are many great civic fireworks displays being held around the state and I encourage you to attend one near you.

Have a great and fun Fourth of July. But please, celebrate responsibly.”

Fireworks Press Conference Attendees
July 2, 2003

Governor Stewart Paisano
Bill Fulginetti
Samuel Montoya
Bob Caldarelli
Mayor Archie Vigil
Mayor Calvin Litchfield
Manager Richard Primrose
Fire Chief Mike Cherry
Mayor Bob Rosebrough
Mayor Mary Smith
Fire Chief George Martinez
Mayor John Garcia
Fire Chief Joseph Garcia
Fire Chief Felix Gallegos
Fire Chief Robert Chavez
Mayor Henry Sanchez
City Manager Morris Madrid
Fire Chief Phillip Mares
Mayor Tony Roybal
Fire Chief Douglas MacDonald
Mayor Bob Miller
Mayor Gloria Chavez
Clerk Stephanie Muller
Eric Homerfield
Fire Chief Ray Wolf
Fire Chief Ron Burnham
Fire Chief Karl Ehl
Fire Chief David Sperling
Fire Chief Robert Monsivaiz
City Manager Jay Czar

Sandia Pueblo
New Mexico Municipal League
New Mexico Association of Counties
Raton
Chama
Tucumcari
Tucumcari
Tucumcari
Gallup
Cimarron
Cimmaron
Jemez Springs
Jemez Springs
Chama
Tularosa
Las Vegas
Las Vegas
Las Vegas
Pecos
Los Alamos
Ruidoso Downs
Village of Tijeras
Village of Tijeras
Gallup
Española
Red River
Moriarty
Santa Fe
Sunland Park
Albuquerque

Mayor Adan Encinias
Mayor Charles Aguilar
Public Safety Officer Joseph Grider
Mayor Jim Owen
Mayor Gary Kanin

Moriarity
Bernalillo
Jemez Springs
Rio Rancho
Corrales