



Governor Bill Richardson Allocates \$300,000 in Emergency Funding to Fight New Mexico Wildfires

**Governor supports decision to bill feds for additional crews and
equipment, again urges USDA to allow some heavy air tankers to fly**

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Contact: Pahl Shipley
505.476.2202

SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson announced today that he has authorized nearly \$300,000 in emergency funding for the State Forester to immediately purchase water tanks, pumps, and related equipment to give fire crews the reliable supplies of water for air tankers, helicopters, and trucks.

“I have always advocated, and will continue to support a policy of immediate and massive response to kill wildfires before they spread,” said Governor Richardson. “Today I’m taking immediate action to support the brave men and women risking their lives fighting the Peppin Fire, and other wildfires in New Mexico, as they work to protect the lives and property of New Mexicans.”

This critical funding will buy a 500,000-gallon water tank that will be positioned in the heart of the Lincoln National Forest. The funding will also buy six “Pumpkins” - portable 5- thousand gallon water tanks that will be located in high-risk areas throughout the state.

Governor Richardson applauded Butch Blazer of State Forestry for deploying critical weapons against wildfire, particularly in light of the administration’s grounding of the heavy air tankers. Governor Richardson announced that he strongly supports the plan to bill the USDA for the cost of these rapid response units, which currently totals \$1.5 million.

“The government has created the need to deploy these resources- it should cover the costs,” said Governor Bill Richardson.

Governor Richardson also announced a meeting later today with an aviation expert regarding a proposal to convert military A-10 aircraft into firefighting air tankers. After the meeting, Governor Richardson will ask the USDA to reconsider their position and allow some heavy air tankers to fly. “The administration grounded the 33 heavy air tankers at the start of the fire season without a contingency plan in place,” said Governor Richardson. This removed a critical wildfire fighting tool from our arsenal.”

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