



## **Governor Bill Richardson Contacts USDA and US Forest Service- Secures Commitment to Make Two Military Air Tankers Available to Fight New Mexico's Peppin Fire**

**Tankers based in Phoenix to be on-site no later than Thursday**

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson announced late this afternoon he has received a commitment from the federal government to use two military heavy air tankers to help fight the Peppin Fire, located near Capitan in the Lincoln National Forest.

Governor Richardson personally called Mark Rey, Undersecretary of the US Department of Agriculture, and Dale Bosworth, Chief of the US Forest Service, to request permission to deploy the aircraft. The Governor's office and state emergency management staff also spoke with Van Bateman, Incident Commander for the Peppin Fire.

"I'm grateful the Forest Service responded to our request for the air tankers," said Governor Richardson. "These planes will be a big boost to firefighters' efforts to contain this devastating wildfire."

Governor Richardson has been working with the office of US Senator Pete Domenici to resolve this critical situation.

The Peppin Fire has now burned approximately 24,000 acres of forest. The most intense fire has been found in remote, rugged terrain too dangerous for firefighters to work on the ground. Currently, SEAT (Single Engine Air Tankers that resemble converted crop dusters) planes and helicopters are being used to drop water and fire retardant.

Yesterday, Governor Richardson signed two Executive Orders authorizing the New Mexico National Guard to use two Blackhawk helicopters to assist with water drops on

the fire. The Governor's action also declared an emergency in Lincoln County, and made available \$750,000 in funding for state and local firefighting efforts. Today, the Governor was notified the federal government has approved New Mexico's request for a Fire Management Assistance Grant for the Peppin Fire. This makes federal emergency funding available for state and local emergency costs on a 75% federal / 25% local match.

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