



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Takes Action to Free Up \$3 Million for Statewide Fire Fighting Efforts

(Santa Fe, NM) – Governor Bill Richardson has taken action to free up an additional \$3 million in state funds to help with fire prevention and fire clean up efforts currently being conducted in New Mexico. These four executive orders provide \$750,000 each to the Forestry Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to pay for wildland fire response, suppression, post fire rehabilitation, and preparation including pre-positioning of firefighters and equipment.

This action follows the Governor's statewide fire emergency declaration last month that included \$750,000 in emergency financial resources for local governments that declare an emergency, impose necessary fire restrictions, and request assistance. This was the first statewide fire emergency declaration in New Mexico history.

“Wildfires have already scorched hundreds of thousands of acres in the state and forecasts indicate that this fire season has the potential to be disastrous in New Mexico,” said Governor Richardson. “These funds will help with fire prevention efforts as well as help pay for costs as a result of the fires that have already occurred.”

The Forestry Division of the State Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department estimates the accumulated fire costs of the Ojo Feliz fire near Mora at \$3.2 million.

State Forestry Officials are currently in a state of high alert due to continued high winds, low humidity, warm temperatures, and the abundance of fuels across New Mexico.

“I am asking New Mexicans to please be very, very careful this spring and summer,” said Governor Richardson. “One of the reasons I have been so vigilant on keeping the state's financial reserves at a healthy level is because of the high fire danger. I will continue to provide whatever state resources are necessary to help us fight fires, but every New Mexican must also do their part to prevent fires from starting.”

Fire prevention tips include:

- Remove flammable debris
- Keep roofs and rain gutters free of needles, leaves, and other flammable material.
- Keep firewood and other flammable material a minimum of 50 feet from the house or other structures on your property.
- Mow grasses and weeds to a height of less than 6 inches within 50 feet of the home.
- Use fire resistant landscaping

Governor Richardson's funding priorities for this year included \$4 million in severance bond funds for fire mitigation. This funding will help purchase fire fighting equipment and make thinning projects possible.

State law provides that emergency funding be made in increments of \$750,000. The Governor recently signed four executive orders for a total of \$3 million in funding. The text of the Governor's orders can be found here:
<http://www.governor.state.nm.us/2006orders.php>

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