



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

For Immediate Release
January 4, 2006

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Governor Richardson Tours Areas Impacted by Wildfires

(Santa Fe, NM) – Governor Bill Richardson today toured areas and met with residents of Southeastern New Mexico who were impacted by wildfires earlier this week. The Governor received a briefing at Fire Station 1 in Hobbs, toured the burned area with Hobbs Fire Chief Manny Gomez and State Forestry officials, and visited two long-term care facilities evacuated during the fires.

Governor Richardson also spoke with representatives from most of the local area fire departments during his briefing and tour. The fire officials were unanimous in their request for additional funding assistance for fire fighting equipment.

“I listened to their needs and I will work with the legislature to secure additional funding for fire fighting equipment in rural areas,” Governor Richardson said. “I also personally thanked all those whose heroic efforts helped save lives, protect property, and prevent further devastation. My mandate in emergency situations is to be as pro-active as possible, and to get state relief and resources where they’re needed without unnecessary bureaucracy or red tape.”

On Sunday, Governor Richardson directed state agencies, specifically the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Operations Center, as well as the State Forestry Division, to closely monitor the situation and offer any possible help that might be needed. This included sending two National Guard helicopters to assist, dispatching an incident commander, suppression resources and equipment for the Tatum fires, and helping to coordinate fire equipment for the Buckeye fire.

The state has also submitted a Fire Management Assistance Grant, which has been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and will provide a 75%-25% federal match in funding the costs of fighting the fires.

These actions build upon efforts Governor Richardson has made in recent years to help get first responders the best equipment possible. This included providing 47 fire departments across the state with new trucks to help fight wildfires in 2004. One of those trucks went to the town of Knowles located near the burn area.

“I will continue to work with the legislature to provide our first responders the tools and resources they need to keep our homes, our families, and our communities safe,” Governor Richardson said. “The danger from these fires has passed, but we have not seen the last of this kind of fire activity. I don’t have to tell you it’s dry, windy, and dangerous with no significant relief in sight.”

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