

Best Practices for Wildfire Mitigation Funding

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Laura McCarthy
State Forester
Forestry Division Director
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources
Department



State Crews Respond to Wildfire

Hand Crews and Crew Modules – 6 total

- Wildfire Response Program Rio Grande Type 2 Initial Attack Hand Crew located in Santa Fe (9 FTE, 11 Emergency Hires)
- Mimbres Type 2 Initial Attack Hand Crew located in Socorro (20 FTE)
- Pecos River Wildland Fire Suppression Module located in Las Vegas (20 FTE)
- Mod 3 Wildland Fire Suppression Module located in Socorro (5-8 Emergency Hires)
- Mod 5 Wildland Fire Suppression Module located in Capitan (5-8 Emergency Hires)
- Mod 6 Wildland Fire Suppression Module located in Bernalillo (5-8 Emergency Hires)



Wildfire Engine crews – 20 total, all with Type 6 Wildland Suppression Engines

- Chama District – 2 engines staffed 1 part time, 4 Emergency Hires
- Cimarron District - 2 engines staffed with 1 Part time, 4 Emergency Hires
- Socorro District - 3 engines staffed with 1 Part time, 12 Emergency Hires
- Las Vegas District - 4 engines staffed with 1 Part time, 4 Emergency Hires
- Capitan District - 2 engines staffed with 1 Part time, 7 Emergency Hires
- Bernalillo District - 2 engines staffed with 1 Part time, 8 Emergency Hires
- Albuquerque Fire Center – 1 engine staffed with 4 FTE
- Wildfire Response Program - 4 engines staffed with 9 FTE and Emergency Hires



Aviation Resources to Respond to Wildfire



FY	State Expenditure on Aviation Resources
2021	\$657,032
2022	\$3,188,047
2023	\$1,193,362
2024	\$4,520,422



Aviation Type	Capacity in Gallons	Cost per Flight Hour	Retardant Cost per Gallon	Total Contract Availability	Call When Needed /Surge
Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT)	9,300	\$14,750	\$4.80-\$8.00	2	2
Large Air Tanker (LAT)	2,800 - 3,000	\$9,575	\$4.80-\$8.00	16	14
Scooper		\$25,000			6
Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT)	800	\$3,800	\$4.80-\$8.00	4	
Type 1 Helicopter	700	\$2,100	n/a	29	Up to 470 Helicopters (all types)
Type 2 Helicopter	300	\$2,100	n/a	34	
Type 3 Helicopter	100	\$2,100	n/a	40	

Local Governments Respond to Wildfire

The Forestry Division works with Counties and Municipalities to develop Resource Mobilization Plans (RMP) that allow their wildland fire resources to participate in firefighting statewide and out of state.

- 10 Counties participate
- 19 Municipalities participate

The RMP capacity in 2024 includes:

- Emergency Medical Units
- Type 6 Wildland Engines
- Type 3 Wildland Engines
- Water Tenders
- Overhead Positions
- 20 Person Hand Crew
- Wildland Response Module



Top: Rio Communities Fire Dept filling a water tank for helicopter bucket dips. Left: Valencia County Wildland Captain providing leadership for initial attack.

Facilities for Wildfire Response

Chama District – 1 heated engine bay for current size of engine, supply cache, bunk house

Cimarron District – 1 heated engine bay for current size of engine, supply cache, bunk house

Socorro District - 2 heated engine bays, supply cache, saw maintenance shop, training room

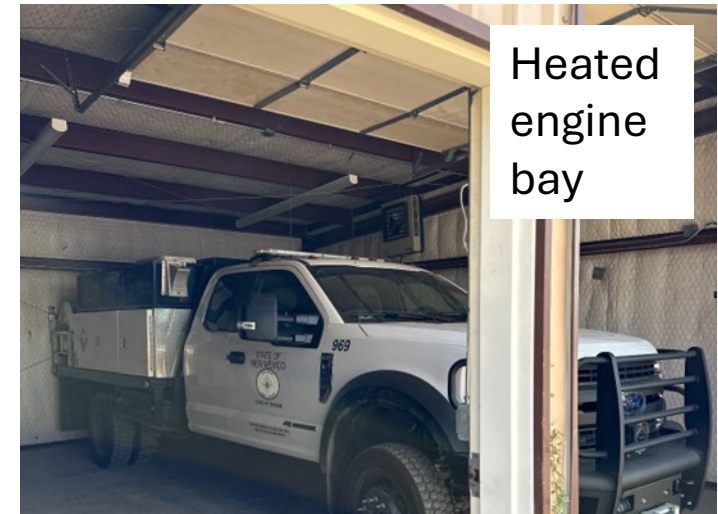
Las Vegas District – 1 heated engine bay, 3 unheated engine bays that are too small, supply cache, saw maintenance shop, training room

Capitan District - 2 heated engine bays, supply cache, bunk house, training room

Bernalillo District - 3 heated engine bays, supply cache, saw maintenance shop, training room, bunk house

WRP, Santa Fe - 4 engine heated engine bays, 4 covered parking for crew carriers, supply cache, saw maintenance shop, saw shop, training room

Albuquerque Fire Center – statewide operations center, supply cache



FEMA Reimburses 75% for Wildfire that Threaten Homes

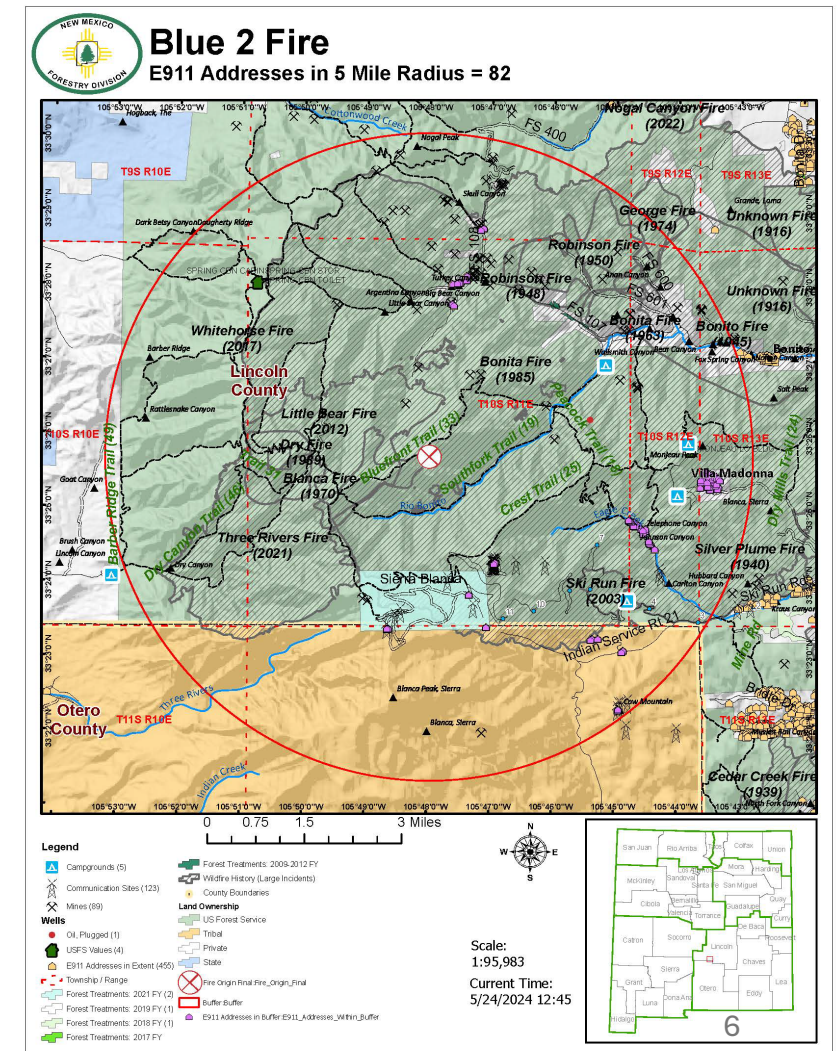
Criteria to Request Fire Management Assistance Grant

1. Threat to lives and improved property
 - Area population, number of homes, critical facilities, infrastructure
 - Evacuations/Shelters
2. Availability of State and Local firefighting resources
 - Number of firefighters and equipment committed to fire
 - Number of fires burning in area and state
 - Number of additional resources being requested by Incident Command
3. High fire danger conditions
 - Fire conditions and weather
 - Fire restrictions
4. Potential major economic impacts
 - Potential dollar lost
 - Loss of homes and property
 - Loss of infrastructure
 - Loss of business and jobs
 - Loss of tourism revenue
 - Overall cost of fighting the fire (personnel, equipment, expendables)



Fire Management Assistance Grant Program and Policy Guide

FP-104-21-0002 / June 2021



Current Practices to Pay for Wildfires

Currently, New Mexico does not proactively budget for wildfire suppression costs, other than salaries for some personnel. Instead, the Forestry Division regularly relies on accessing emergency funding through executive orders capped at \$750,000 each for even minor fire incidents. This practice presents several challenges:

- ***The total cost of wildfire suppression is not included in the annual appropriations process.***
 - Most fire suppression funding remains outside the scope of the annual appropriations process, hampering the legislature's understanding of the total cost of wildfires.
 - Federal reimbursements for wildfire suppression expenses often take multiple years to resolve. These reimbursements eventually revert to the general fund rather than remaining with the Forestry Division, making it difficult to track what costs are ultimately paid from federal funds versus reimbursements from other states.
- ***The current process fails to proactively plan for wildfire suppression costs.***
 - Wildfire expenses are a volatile but predictable expense. However, reliance on Executive Orders (EO) means that the state relies on an emergency funding mechanism for a known need instead of anticipating those costs.
 - ***The current process is administratively inefficient.***
 - *For example, in 2022 the fiscal year end arrived when the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon Fire was still raging. EMNRD had to request 40 EO that were issued in late June. It happened again in 2024 year when the South Fork and Salt Fires were burning and EMNRD needed 40 EO.*
 - The use of executive orders requires officials across multiple agencies to rush to complete additional paperwork each time additional fire funding is needed. The \$750,000 limit on these orders means this task must be repeated multiple times each fire season.