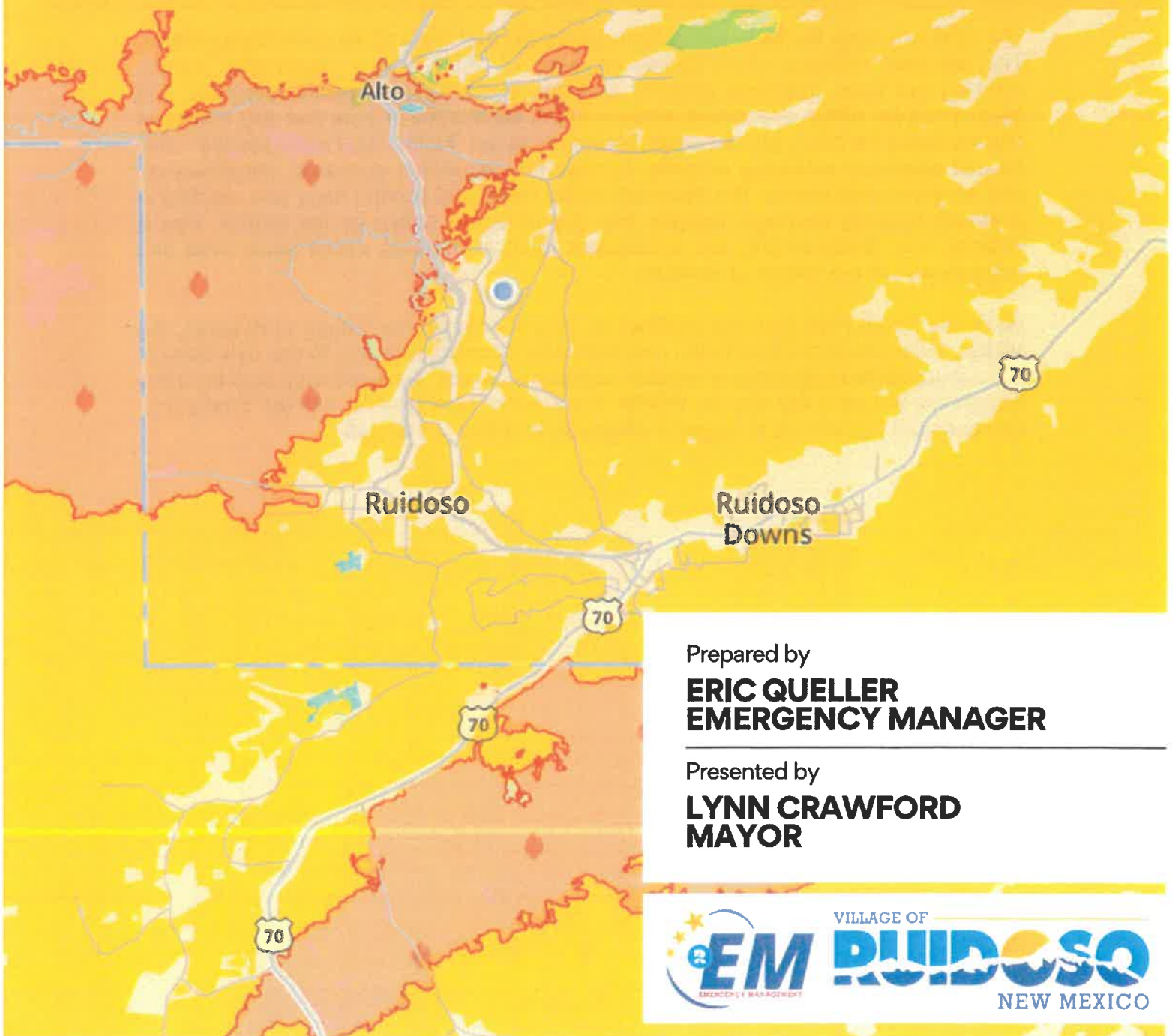


THE SOUTH FORK & SALT WILDFIRE

IMPACTS & SEQUENCE OF EVENTS REPORT



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EMERGENCY MANAGER

Presented by
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MAYOR



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Sequence of Events Report (SER) focuses on the Village of Ruidoso Office of Emergency Management (ROEM), actions, decisions, and external strains. The primary objective of this report is to understand the initial response to the South Fork and Salt Wildfires and the June-September post-burn scar flooding.

This report is the initial report of the After-Action process. It will lead to a full After-Action Report (AAR); this report will be generated once the Emergency Operations Center downgrades its response to the ongoing disaster and response operations cease and fully move into the intermediate and long-term recovery operation.

The SER examines the facts and outlines the scope and scale of the collective incidents. The two main wildfires, which ignited on June 17, 2024, had a catastrophic impact, claiming two lives, extensive property damage, triggering a statewide response, and leading to a full village evacuation. Additionally, in the months of June and July, monsoon rain impacted the newly burned areas, leading to seven "Flash Flood Emergencies." This caused additional extensive property damage and significant economic, infrastructure, and environmental losses. The aftermath of the fire(s) and flood(s) have also resulted in a severe housing shortage. Despite this, the collective action by the ROEM, Fire & Rescue, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Medical Services saved many lives and property across the Village of Ruidoso.

While the South Fork and Salt wildfires no longer threaten the Village of Ruidoso, the Village continues to respond to the post-burn scar flooding, adapting to this new normal. As unprecedented and extreme weather conditions persist, the lessons learned from this experience will pave the way for ROEM, the State of New Mexico, and the Emergency Management Community to respond effectively to future challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The most extensive deployment in the Village of Ruidoso's history occurred during the unprecedented series of wildfires and floods that began on June 17, 2024. The South Fork Fire was the largest acreage loss at 17,569.21 acres, and then the Salt Fire at 7,939 acres. Followed by the seven Flash Flood Emergencies. The collective property loss is estimated at 700M dollars.

Nearly every staff member and vehicle resource of the Ruidoso Fire Department, Ruidoso Police Department, Ruidoso Public Works Department, Ruidoso Office of Emergency Management, and neighboring jurisdictions were deployed. The emergency response system did not fail but was instead outmatched by the extreme fire conditions. Staff members endured shift hours of 48 hours or more and risked their lives in an effort to protect lives, save property, and stabilize the incident.

The purpose of this SER is to identify key facts and lay the foundation of an After-Action Report (AAR), forwarding recommendations that will effectively address future challenges. Emergency Manager Eric Queller, understanding the need for an impartial evaluation, will engage with the New Mexico Association of Emergency Management Professionals to conduct the full review of the incident and produce the full AAR.

VOR Staff members are intentionally not named, allowing the focus to center on the collective nature of the incidents and actions taken. The sequence of events was gathered by ICS 214 Forms, ICS 213 Requests, Daily Situation Reports, and Emails between staff members. Additionally, the SER does not address the cause or origin of the fires, as other entities are reviewing these details.

VILLAGE OF RUIDOSO

Ruidoso Office of Emergency Management

The Ruidoso Office of Emergency Management (ROEM), under Chapter 30, is charged with coordinating the efforts of all municipal agencies, employees, and nongovernmental agencies to prevent the endangerment of the lives and property of the village's citizens during periods of natural and man-caused disasters, emergencies, and acts of war. ROEM is under the authority of the Village of Ruidoso and reports to the executive office governed by the mayor, six council members, and the Village Manager. ROEM consists of one emergency manager who executes the coordination and development of emergency plans.

Ruidoso Fire Department

The Ruidoso Fire Department (RFD) is under the authority of the Village of Ruidoso and is governed by the mayor, six council members, and the Village Manager. RFD consists of a Fire Chief, One Assistant Chief, Three Shift Captains, Three Shift Lieutenants, and One Office Manager.

Ruidoso Police Department

The Ruidoso Police Department (RPD) is under the authority of the Village of Ruidoso and is governed by the mayor, six council members, and the Village Manager. RPD consists of a Police Chief, One Deputy Chief,

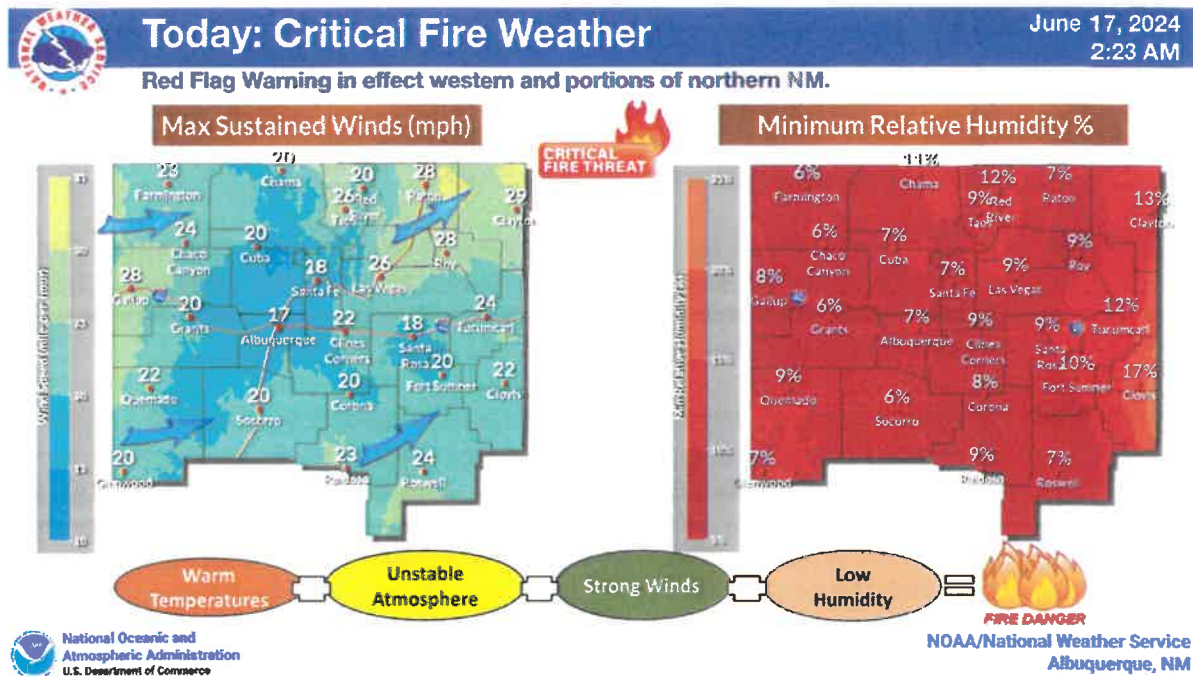
Ruidoso Public Works Department

The Ruidoso Public Works Department (RPWD) is under the authority of the Village of Ruidoso and is governed by the mayor, six council members, and the Village Manager. RPWD consists of a Public Works Director, One Streets Manager, One Water/ Sewer Manager, and Two Office Managers.

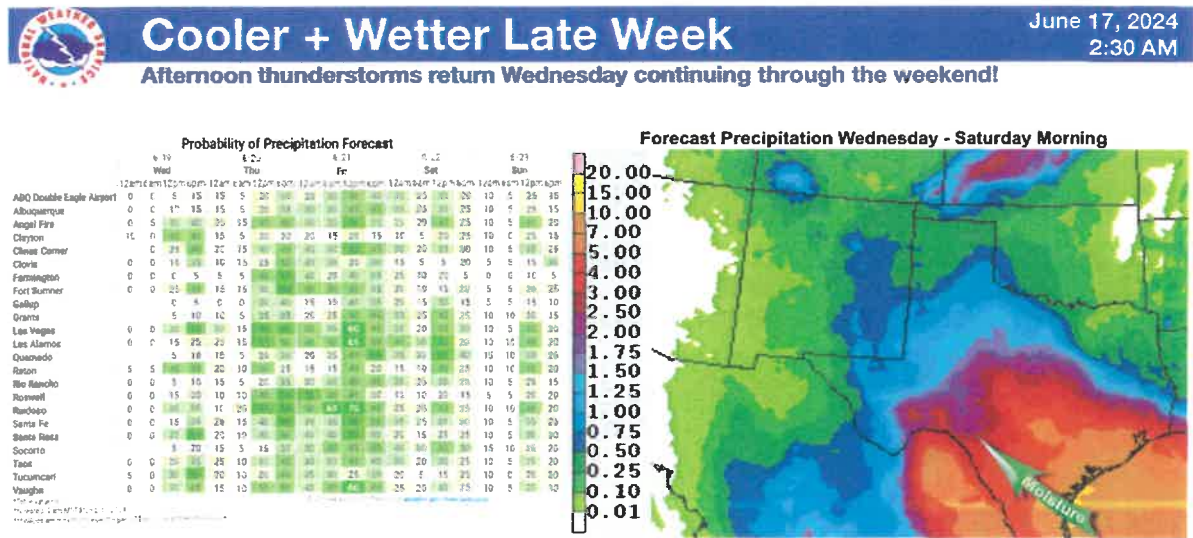
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Two main factors influenced the 2024 Ruidoso Wildfires and Flood Events:

The near-critical fire weather in the Sacramento Mountains, the day of the fire, and the next day.



And the beginning of the 2024 monsoon season for the Sacramento Mountains.



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events provides a summary of the two major wildfires and seven flash flood emergencies, and actions taken by ROEM. It includes minute-by-minute details and a few individual actions on specific key points.

JUNE 17, 2024

- 9:42 AM** United States Forest Service (USFS) Notified VOR of a small fire on the reservation about 2-3 miles from the end of the Upper Canyon. Crews were en route, and air resources were ordered.
- 10:00 AM** ROEM was notified by the USFS Smokey Bear Fire Management Officer about Grindstone Lake being a dip-point for air attack resources. ROEM notified executive leadership, and Ruidoso Parks and Rec about the dip-point. Grindstone was evacuated for air attack Resources.
- 11:21 AM** ROEM issued an Initial Incident Report to executive leadership and the Ruidoso Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff. At the time of the report, the EOC Activation Level was at level 3 (Increased Readiness), and Ruidoso Community Lifelines were all green and stable. During the same period, the smoky bear hot shots on the fire ground reported to Interagency Dispatch that they were pulling back due to extreme fire behavior.
- 12:43 PM** Mescalero Notified ROEM that the South Fork Fire has grown, and Upper Canyon and Brady Canyon residents need to be placed in a "Ready Status."
- 12:44 PM** ROEM contacted executive leadership and moved the EOC Activation Level to 2 (High Readiness/ Escalated Response Conditions), recalling the following Emergency Support Functions (ESF) Staff:
- ESF 2 Communications
 - ESF 3 Public Works
 - ESF 4 Firefighting
 - ESF 5 Emergency Management
 - ESF 6 Logistics
 - ESF 13 Law Enforcement
- Essentially, the Emergency Operations Center's Command and General Staff (C&G). ROEM notified the Lincoln County Office of Emergency Services of level 2 activation. C&G met and discussed the threat.
- 1:00 PM** ROEM issued a wildfire "Ready" Status for Upper Canyon and Brady Canyon, using the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System. This system

issued the following alert via the Wireless Emergency Alert System (Amber Alert System), NOAA Weather Radio, Local TV, and Radio Stations.

“Ruidoso OEM: Be aware that we are monitoring a wildfire North of Upper Canyon. Upper Canyon and Brady Canyon are in "Ready" Status. Monitor local media sources to receive updated info. This is the time for preparation and precautionary movement of persons with special needs and livestock. If conditions worsen, public officials will issue additional alerts.”

1:18 PM ROEM moved the EOC activation Level to 1 (Maximum Readiness/ Emergency Conditions) and recalled all ESF Functions and 40 EOC Staff members to Fire Station One. The State of New Mexico EOC was notified via the DHSEM State Director. The Red Cross was also notified for sheltering needs. Local buses were notified and assisted with evacuations. The Healthcare Coalition Emergency Preparedness Coordinator was notified.

1:28 PM ROEM issued a wildfire “Go” Status for Upper Canyon and Brady Canyon, using the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System. This system issued the following alert via the Wireless Emergency Alert System (Amber Alert System), NOAA Weather Radio, Local TV, and Radio Stations.

“Ruidoso Emergency Management: A wildfire is moving towards Upper Canyon / Brady Canyon. Evacuate immediately! When evacuating, take Main Road to NM 48. Do not delay leaving to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home. An evacuation shelter has been established at Ruidoso Convention Center. For more information, tune into 1490 AM.”

2:21 PM The Ruidoso Convention Center opened its doors for evacuations, and an Emergency Call Center was established for local residents. The South Fork Fire ArcGIS Map was deployed to the public for evacuation notification.

Areas on a Wildfire “Go Status”

Upper Canyon
Brady Canyon
Ponderosa Heights
Alpine Village (Est of Musketball)
Cedar Creek

ROEM was also notified that a second wildfire, the Salt Fire, had started just north of Apache Summit. ROEM continued monitoring.

3:47 PM ROEM contacted Roswell OEM, notified them about the ongoing situation, and started planning for a possible village-wide evacuation. Due to two (NM

48 North & US 70 West) of the three (US 70 East) egress routes out of Ruidoso being compromised. Roswell OEM notified ROEM that their shelter would be at the ENMU Roswell Campus.

5:58 PM ROEM was notified that the South Fork Fire was progressing to Flume Canyon, and ROEM issued a wildfire "Go" Status for Flume Canyon, using the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System. This system issued the following alert via the Wireless Emergency Alert System (Amber Alert System), NOAA Weather Radio, Local TV, and Radio Stations.

"Ruidoso Emergency Management: A wildfire is moving toward Flume Canyon. Evacuate immediately! When evacuating, take Flute Canyon Road. Do not delay leaving to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home. An evacuation shelter has been established at Capitan High School. For more information, tune into 1490 AM."

ROEM was notified that the Salt wildfire was progressing significantly towards Ruidoso Downs.

6:20 PM ROEM was notified that the South Fork Fire & Salt Fire was progressing significantly, with Spot Fires about a mile out from the fire's head.

6:40 PM Due to the information and situational awareness at the time, ROEM made the recommendation to the executive office to authorize a Village-wide evacuation. The Mayor concurred and gave the authorization.

ROEM issued a wildfire "Go" Status for the entire Village of Ruidoso, using the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System. This system issued the following alert via the Wireless Emergency Alert System (Amber Alert System), NOAA Weather Radio, Local TV, and Radio Stations.

"Ruidoso Emergency Management: A wildfire is moving towards the Village of Ruidoso. Evacuate immediately! When evacuating, take NM 48 to US 70 to Roswell. Do not delay leaving to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home. An evacuation shelter has been established at ENMU-Roswell. For more information, tune into 1490 AM."

ROEM instructed the Ruidoso Area Dispatch to activate the Ruidoso Outdoor Warning System.

7:40 PM Cell phone communications and Internet went down, Village and County Wide.

- 8:00 PM** The County Office of Emergency Services recon EOC locations and determined that the only area that still had Internet and communication in the County was Carrizozo, NM. The VOR Emergency Manager instructed the non-essential EOC staff to evacuate the Fire Station One EOC due to extreme fire conditions and the lack of communication ability at the current location. The VOR Emergency Manager, Deputy Village Manager, Assistant Fire Chief, Public Information Officer, and the Fire Dept. Office Manager stayed.
- 9:00 PM** The VOR Emergency Manager, acting EOC Director, officially directed the relocation of the EOC to Carrizozo, NM.
- 10:49 PM** The EOC was officially up and operational in Carrizozo, NM. Public information updates were continued, and ROEM was notified that the Village Evacuation was complete, traffic lines were out of town, and the limited presence of people was reported. In total, it is estimated that 15,000 people were evacuated.
- 11:00 PM** The EOC lost situational awareness of ongoing operations in the Village due to no Fire or Police Radio Traffic. The main radio repeater for the Village burned over, and both public safety entities declined to use County Radio Channels.

JUNE 18, 2024

- 2:28 AM** The VOR issued the order for all employees to stay in place until they hear from their supervisors.
- 3:00 AM** The Emergency Manager and Deputy Manager requested a Mobile Command Unit for the restoration of Internet and communications at the Fire Station One EOC. This request was made by the Deputy Manager to the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Unit.
- 3:30 AM** Due to the loss of situational awareness, the Emergency Manager and Deputy Village Manager relocated back to the Fire Station One EOC location to try and regain situational awareness.
- 4:00 AM** ROEM and the Ruidoso Area Dispatch started a missing persons list, generated with 911 and non-emergency line calls for service. The initial missing persons list was 12 and increased to 30 over the next few days.
- 7:00 AM** The HSI Mobile Command Unit arrived and restored Internet/communications to the Fire Station One EOC. The South Fork Fire grew to

13,921 acres overnight, and the Salt Fire 4,876 acres. The complex fire Incident Management Team was ordered and would take command of the fire in the afternoon. The EOC and ROEM would still be in charge of evacuations, human services, and enacting the Village Emergency Operations Plan and continuity of government.

In coordination with New Mexico State Police, roadblocks were established at each entry point into the Village of Ruidoso for people's safety and to allow fire personnel to work.

12:43 PM The decision was made to relocate the EOC back to Fire Station One, as Communications were back up and running and fire behavior no longer posed a threat to the EOC. During this time, the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County made the decision to establish a Unified Command EOC, due to the jurisdictional complexities.

3:43 PM At the request of the Lincoln County Office of Emergency Services, ROEM issued a wildfire "Go" status for Ruidoso Downs using the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System. This system issued the following alert via the Wireless Emergency Alert System (Amber Alert System), NOAA Weather Radio, Local TV, and Radio Stations.

"LC Emergency Management: A wildfire is moving towards Ruidoso Downs. Evacuate immediately! When evacuating, take NM 48 to Roswell. Do not delay leaving to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home. An evacuation shelter has been established at ENMU-Roswell. For more information, tune into 1490 AM."

4:00 PM ROEM conducted a quick windshield damage survey and estimated that about 600+ structures were lost due to the South Fork Fire. Spot Fires were still a major concern on power and wastewater infrastructure. The concern for a Public Safety Power Shutoff was still a possibility. Initial attack and structure protection operations were still ongoing and would continue in the evening and overnight.

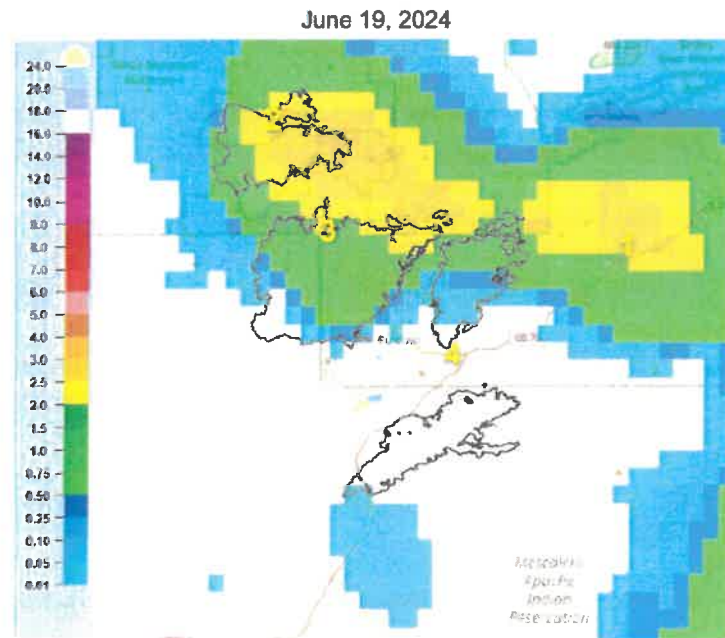
JUNE 19, 2024

During the overnight hours, the National Weather Service issued a Flood Watch for the area from 3 PM to late that night. ROEM started preparing for post-burn scar flooding impacts by requesting an Incident Meteorologist be deployed to the EOC.

1:19 PM The National Weather Service, issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County. This was later upgraded to a “Flash Flood Emergency.”

Swiftwater Rescues were conducted at River Ranch RV Park.
Flooding was occurring in the Bonito Lake Area.
Debris and water were flowing across State Highway 532.
Swiftwater Rescues were being conducted out of the Rio Ruidoso.

ROEM requested from the State Operations Center that swiftwater rescue teams be deployed and prepositioned in the area due to post-burn scar flooding.



Firefighting operations continued parallel to flooding operations. The EOC was also moved out of Fire Station One to the Convention Center due to the deployment of the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Team and the growing complexities of the incident.

JUNE 29, 2024

4:54 PM The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.

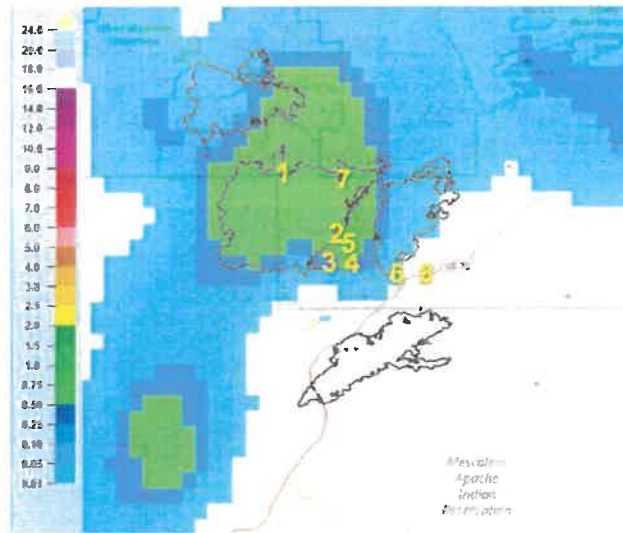
5:09 PM Swiftwater Rescues were underway in the Rio Ruidoso. ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations.

5:11 PM National Weather Service issued a “Flash Flood Emergency” for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

1. Flash Flooding in Eagle Creek crossing NM 532 (Ski Run Road) between mile markers 2 and 3.
2. Cedar Creek flows out of its banks near NM Highway 48 (Mechem Rd), later impassible.
3. Houses being impacted on Sleepy Hollow Road near Rio Ruidoso.
4. Rio Ruidoso rose over the Grindstone Canyon Rd and N Eagle Dr bridges. Swift water rescue at Country Club Dr at Rio Ruidoso.
5. Cedar Creek: Water is overtopping a dam near Cree Meadows Drive and Wiley Rd. The Cree Meadows Drive bridge is also overtopped. People are trapped in vehicles along Paradise Canyon Road.
6. Rio Ruidoso: Water, debris, and sediment completely cover Gavilan Canyon Road at the Gavilan Canyon Softball Field, making the road impassable.
7. Alto Lake diversion channel overtopping into Alto Lake due to high debris flows.
8. Rio Ruidoso flooded over the Ruidoso Downs Racetrack in both places where the track crosses the river.

*Multiple water rescues along the Rio Ruidoso in the low water crossing.

June 29, 2024



JUNE 30, 2024

- 1:59 PM** The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.
- 2:52 PM** Storms keep redeveloping over the Salt Scar, then training northward over S Fork and Blue 2 Scars. These scars may soon receive significant rain accumulation with a risk of major flash flooding. NWS is considering a Flash Flood Emergency.
- 3:20 PM** National Weather Service issued a “Flash Flood Emergency” for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

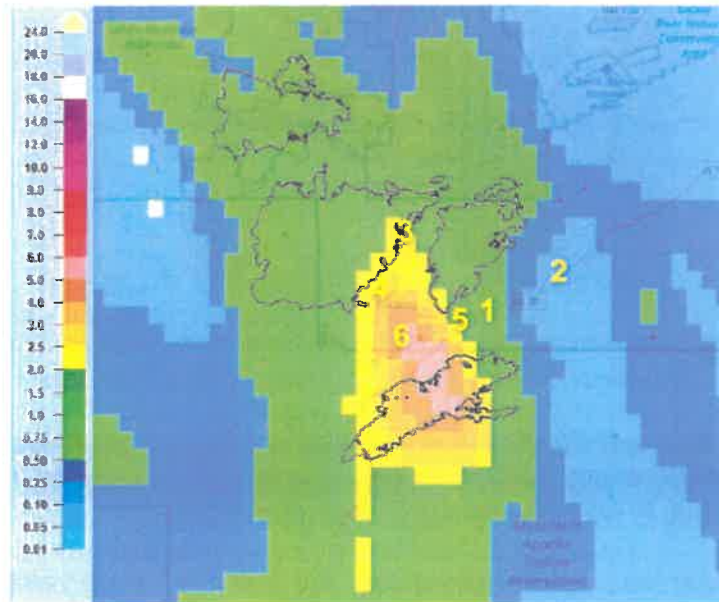
ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations.

1. Swift water rescues are being performed at RV Park along U.S. Highway 70 near Ruidoso Downs.
2. Swift water rescues at Silver Leaf RV Park along U.S. Highway 70 (east of Ruidoso Downs).
3. Emergency services crews are performing swift water rescues on Leon Farrar Dr., as well as fast-flowing water over University Dr at Mechem Dr.
4. The intersection is impassable at Brady Canyon Rd and Poor Dr in Ruidoso.
5. Highway 70 closed at Sudderth Dr due to fast-flowing water over the road. Vehicle submerged just off of U.S. Highway 70 due to burn scar flash flooding. Highway 70 became a fast-flowing river with at least

one truck and a dumpster swiftly floating down the road. Video of tanker semi being carried down Hwy 70 by flood waters at El Paso Rd.

6. Swift Water Rescue is responding to flash flooding at the Rainbow Lake RV Park along Carrizo Creek.

June 30, 2024



July 9, 2024

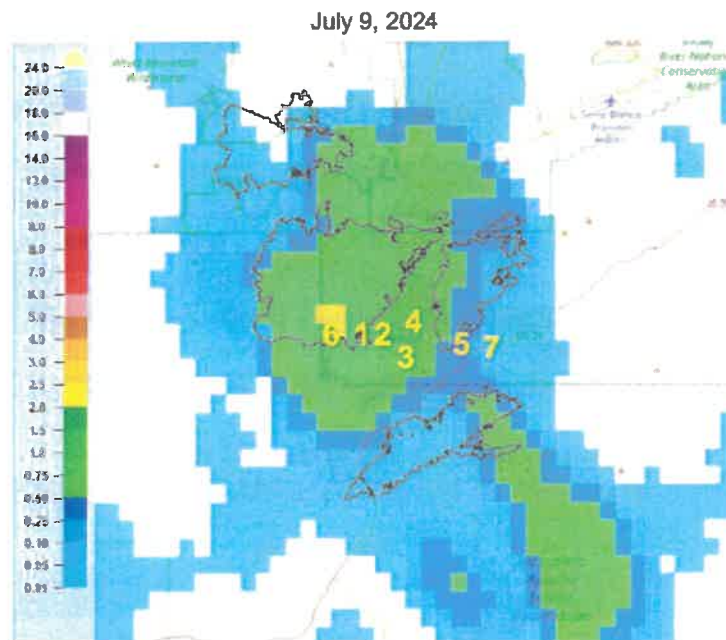
- 1:01 PM** The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.
- 1:11 PM** Swiftwater Rescues underway in the Cedar Creek Area.
- 2:09 PM** The National Weather Service issued a “Flash Flood Emergency” for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations.

1. The roof of the house slid down the road in Rio Ruidoso’s upper canyon at Main Road. Fast-flowing water with a lot of other household debris
2. Fast-moving water flows across Mechem Road at Brady Canyon. Various rescues are occurring in the area. Emergency management reported major flows from multiple drainages. One person trapped by

flood waters in a car needed rescue at Mechem and Sudderth: flash flooding and debris flow near Fern Trail.

3. Video of Rio Ruidoso exceeding its banks and fast, rushing flow 1 W Hollywood.
4. A car was reported to be floating away in flood waters at Paradise Canyon and Hull.
5. Riverside RV Park is reported to be flooded out.
6. Bridge 4 on Main Road (at McDaniel Road) has been washed out. It needs to be replaced.
7. Rio Ruidoso out of its banks at Ruidoso Downs, flooding the horse racetrack.



July 10, 2024

12:39 PM The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.

2:13 PM State Police reporting significant flooding on US 70 and are closing the road.

2:44 PM The National Weather Service issued a “Flash Flood Emergency” for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

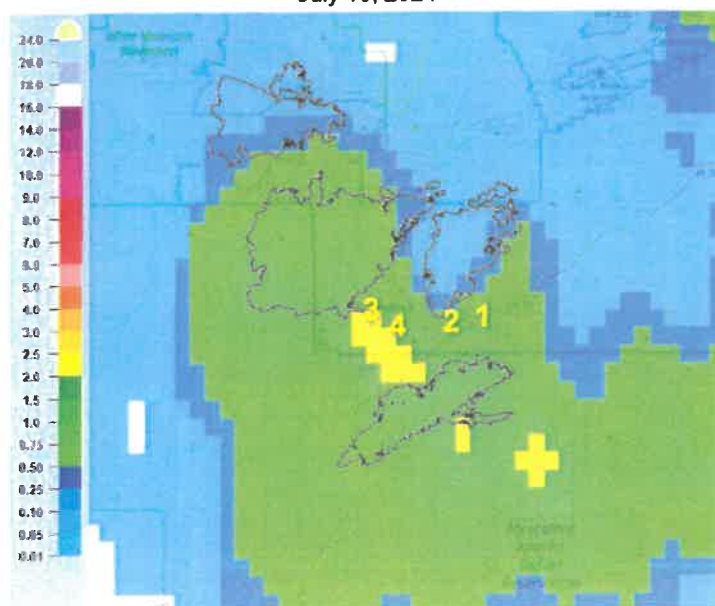
ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations.

1. Report of a shipping container flowing down Highway 70 near Ruidoso Downs.
2. Facebook video showing fast and heavy flow along Sudderth Drive near the Valero gas station. The intersection of US 70 and Sudderth Drive was closed due to flooding. Video from the NM National Guard of a road collapse near the Sudderth Dr and Highway 70 intersection.
3. The intersection of Mechem Drive and Sudderth Drive shut down due to flooding.
4. The pickup truck washed down the Rio Ruidoso 1 W Hollywood.

*Multiple water rescues along the Rio Ruidoso.

*House pushed 10 feet due to water. Unclear location

July 10, 2024



July 20, 2024

1:57 PM The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.

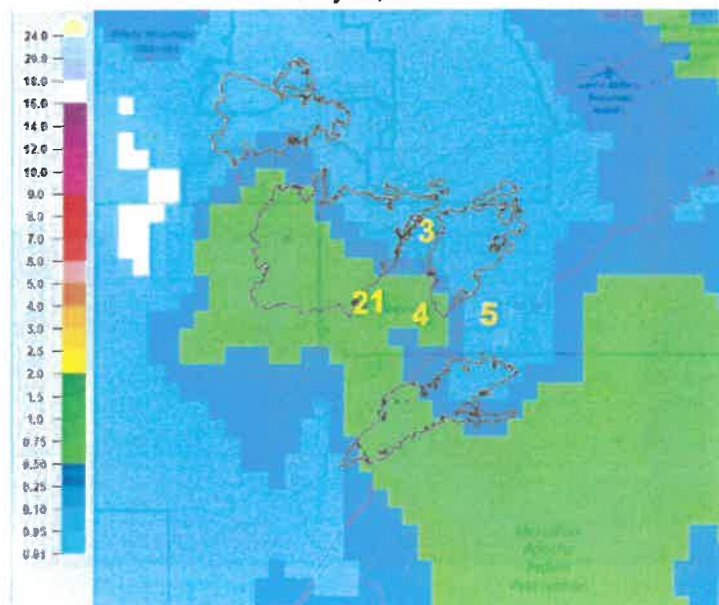
2:33 PM The National Weather Service issued a “Flash Flood Emergency” for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations.

1. Mechem Dr. is closed at Brady Canyon Dr. due to flows in the Rio Ruidoso over the road. Residents need rescue along Brady Canyon Dr. There is a Report of an SUV that has been trapped against a tree due to flood waters.
2. Swift water rescue pulled two vehicles trapped in the water near Johnson Rd.. Bridge 2 at Main Road and Fox Drive impassable due to flooding
3. Water over the roadway at Gavilan Canyon Rd and Eagle Creek Canyon Rd
4. Flash flooding over the bridge at Paradise Canyon Dr. and Sudderth Dr. along Rio Ruidoso.
5. Flash flooding on Ruidoso Downs Race Track

*Evacuation orders were given for Brady Canyon, U.S. Hwy 70, Cedar Creek, areas along the Rio Ruidoso, and Cherokee Village Mobile Home along U.S. Hwy 70.

July 20, 2024



July 29, 2024

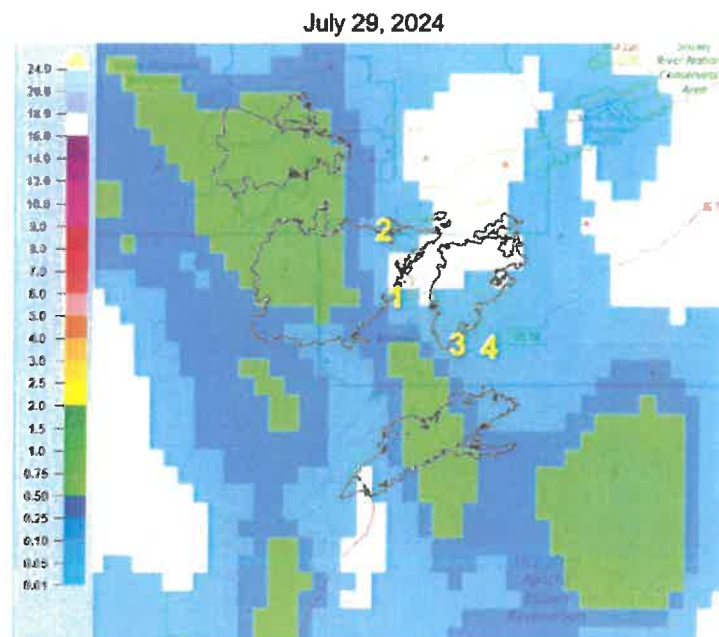
12:41 PM The National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Warning for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to rainfall rates that could cause flash flooding in and around the Village of Ruidoso.

1:47 PM Paradise Canyon @ Starlight Drive is not passable. ROEM started issuing local emergency alerts and evacuations. Cherokee Mobile Home Park was evacuated.

1:20 PM The National Weather Service issued a "Flash Flood Emergency" for the Village of Ruidoso and Lincoln County due to ongoing large-scale Swiftwater rescue efforts.

1. Cedar Creek was reported to be overflowing on Mechem Drive. Road impassable. Significant debris flow was reported at Cree Meadows Drive and Cedar Creek.
2. Heavy flow of water at Winter Park. Highway 532 impassable.
3. Gavilan Canyon Road at the Rio Ruidoso closed. Social media video shows flooding over the bridge.
4. Debris flow from extensive flash flooding destroyed a culvert on the Ruidoso Downs racetrack.

* Cherokee Mobile Village on Highway 70 and Gavilan Mobile Home Park were evacuated.



ACRONYMS

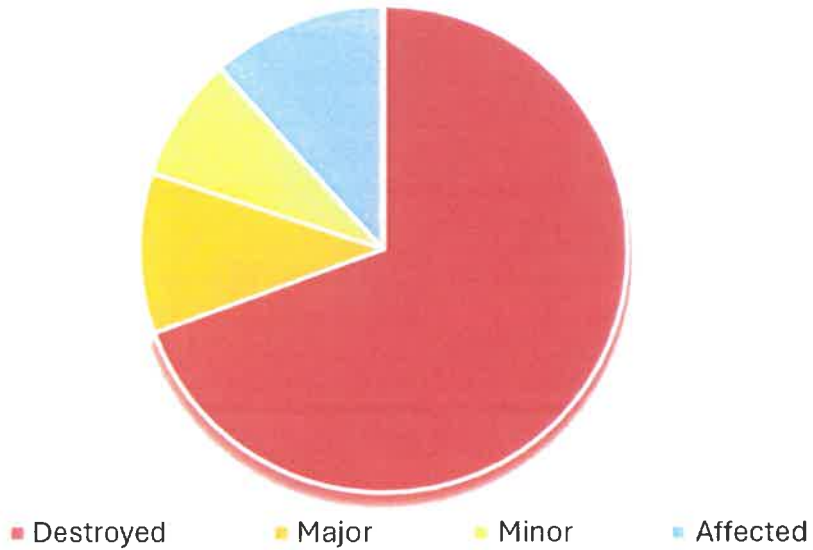
Acronyms	Explanation
AAR	After Action Review
EOC	Emergency Operation Center
VOR	Village of Ruidoso
ROEM	Ruidoso Office of Emergency Management
IC	Incident Commander
ICP	Incident Command Post
RFD	Ruidoso Fire Department
RPD	Ruidoso Police Department
RPWD	Ruidoso Public Works Department
NWS	National Weather Service

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- Since the fire and the flood 343 accounts have been inactivated, which is approximately a loss of \$50,095.15 in utility revenues per month (avg bill \$146.05).
- Lodgers' Tax is down 63.73% (\$432,213) for the first two (2) fiscal months. FY 2024 saw a growth rate of 13.47%. The budget was projected to hit \$3M.
- The estimated loss in property values is \$24,132,147. Rates for the current year did not take into account the loss, so taxing agencies may be short.
- GRT is down 8.50% (\$292,726) for FY 2025 (July and August). The impact is hard to estimate because the tax has a two-month lag from collection to distribution. The September distribution will be the sales from July, which will predict how much loss we can expect. This will also determine the impact of the loss from the racetrack and our tourist season.
- Airport Fuel Sales are down 25.87% (\$72,476) for the first two (2) months of FY 2025. Last year, the Airport was closed for rehabilitation of a runway.

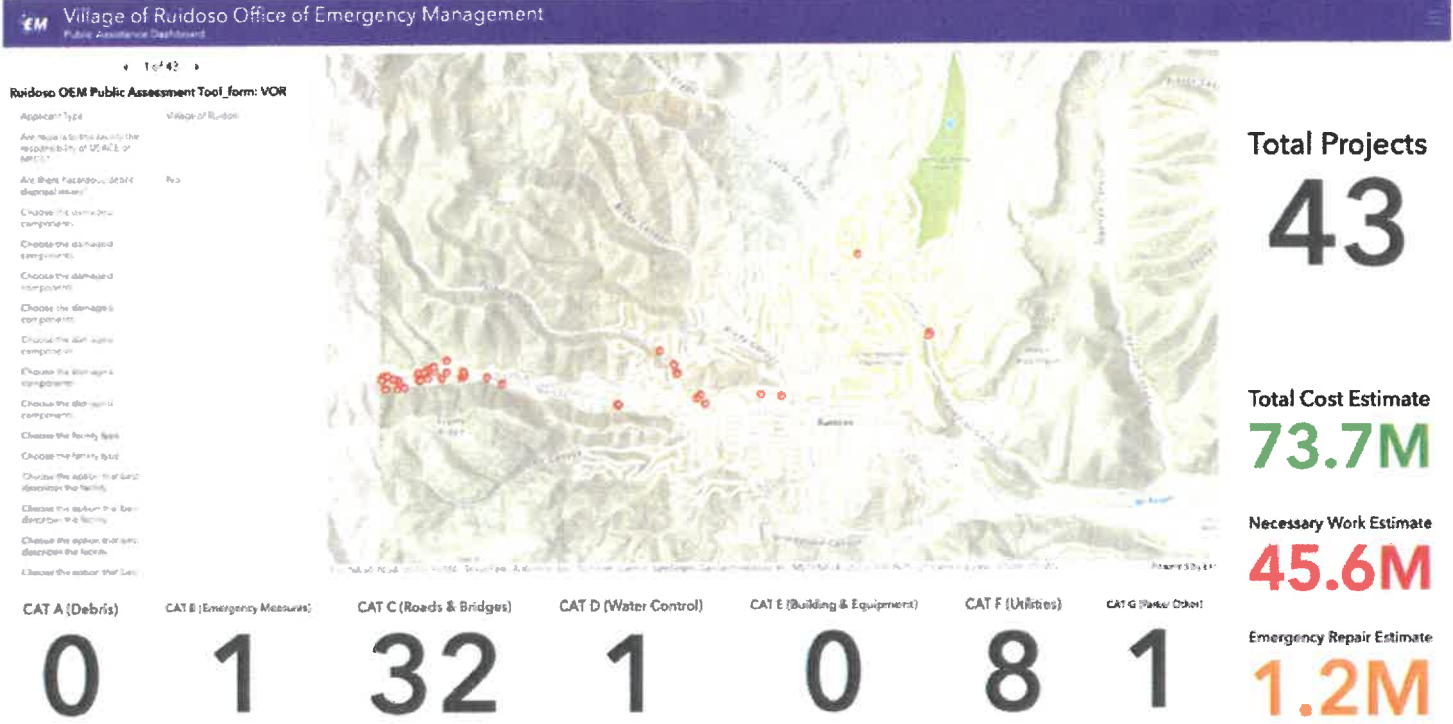
STRUCTURAL IMPACT

Fire and Flood Home Damages



*ROEM staff is still working on data, but the data above reflects both fire and flood damages.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT



*Preliminary data.