



Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands

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Wildfire Preparedness is Year-Round: Don't be fooled, Prepare now

Albuquerque, NM – April 1, 2021 – The dry winter and spring are combining with strong winds to bring wildfire season to many parts of the Southwest already. To prepare for the 2021 wildfire season, the [Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands](#) is working with partners at other forests, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations on a year-round wildfire preparedness campaign. Our April message for the 2021 wildfire preparedness campaign: **Don't be fooled, prepare for wildfire.**

With the increasing fire danger that brings with it the threat to homes and property from flames and embers, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides us with guidance on preparing a [Home Ignition Zone](#). After starting with the home, itself, move into the landscaped portion of your property, or Intermediate Zone. The Intermediate Zone is approximately 5-30 feet from your home, where the objective is to reduce the intensity of the fire through landscaping or “hardscaping.”

- Create breaks in vegetation with driveways, walkways/paths, and patios. When using concrete, stone, gravel or other non-combustible materials, this is known as “hardscaping.”
- Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.
- Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.
- Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns. Prune trees up to six to ten feet from the ground; for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
- Space trees to have a minimum of 18 feet between crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.
- Tree placement should be planned to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than ten feet to the edge of a structure.
- Tree and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters of a few each to break up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.

Preventing ignitions that can lead to wildfires is as important as improving your Home Ignition Zone. Chainsaws, mowers and other equipment can overheat or spark. Using fire to clear acequias or burn debris can be risky in the wrong weather conditions. To prevent causing a fire:

- Ensure your equipment is in good working order.
- Check the weather prior to beginning work. Go to the weather.gov or watch your local news weather report to find out if there is a [Red Flag Warning](#) forecasted that indicates critical fire conditions exist.
- Have the proper tools such as a shovel, fire extinguisher and water readily available.
- Ensure you have a burn permit, when required, and stay until the fire is out.

Finally, if you are not prepared or the weather conditions will be windy and dry, consider doing the work when the weather poses less of a fire risk. For instance, choose a time of day such as early in morning when temperatures are lower, humidity is higher, and winds are calmer.

The Cibola NF & NGs is working with the [Carson](#) and [Santa Fe](#) National Forests, [New Mexico Forestry Division](#), [Forest Stewards Guild](#), [Fire Adapted NM](#) and [Bureau of Land Management New Mexico State Office](#) to build a 2021 wildfire preparedness calendar and share the message across multiple platforms, including social media, webinars and community events. Bookmark the [wildfire preparedness webpage](#) to follow the campaign throughout the year.

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