

**LAS CRUCES DISTRICT OFFICE  
WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLAN**

**2010**

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**Wildfire Prevention Plan  
Bureau of Land Management  
Las Cruces District-BLM  
2010**

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## **PREFACE**

This Las Cruces District Office (NM-LCD) Wildfire Prevention Plan (WPP) is an appendix to the Las Cruces District Office Fire Management Plan. It is developed and approved by the District Fire Management Officer and the District Manager. It is a two-fold document:

- 1) It is an analysis of the district's RISKS, HAZARDS and VALUES.
- 2) It is an operational plan that outlines protection of the district's resources from wildfire impacts.

The plan identifies fire prevention priority areas, actions and responsibilities consistent with the Las Cruces District's land management planning goals.

In order to implement this plan, the following considerations must be made:

- 1) The use of appropriate fire personnel and resources;
- 2) The education and application of district personnel and resources; and
- 3) The documentation for additional resources through the Fire Management Planning process.

This Wildfire Prevention Plan is an adaptable document, lending itself to review and update, as necessary. It is also a dynamic document that can be modified to reflect the changes identified by Resource Management Plan updates and/or a review of District priorities, available resources and budget constraints.

## **INTRODUCTION**

NM LCD will implement this Wildfire Prevention Plan as an integrated element of the district's Fire Management Plan. Wildfire prevention programs will be directed toward wildfire ignitions that pose the greatest potential to cause unacceptable damages.

To properly direct wildfire prevention efforts, it is important to accurately identify problems or potential problems. To identify priority wildfire prevention programs, the following components must be assessed:

1. Risks - Risks are defined as those uses or human activities which have the potential to result in a wildfire ignition. Wherever there are concentrations of people or activity, the potential for a human-caused ignition exists. After assessing the risks within an area, it is helpful to look at historical fires to validate the risk assessment. Historical fires alone, however, are not an accurate reflection of the risks within a given area. The objective of this effort is to determine where the highest degree of risk is within NM-LCD.

2. Hazards - Hazards are defined as the fuels and topography of an area. The objective of examining hazards is to determine the potential for a "large/severe" fire to result from a human-caused ignition. This can be simply put as determining the degree of difficulty in suppressing a fire, once it is ignited.

3. Values - Values are defined as natural or developed areas where loss or destruction by wildfire would be a detriment to society.

Once Risks, Hazards, and Values are evaluated, it is possible to determine when, where, and how to implement effective fire prevention programs. By comparing an area's potential for ignition (risks), its potential to burn after being ignited (hazard) and the values which are threatened by a wildfire (values), the fire prevention plan can be prepared. This plan will concentrate on the highest priority wildfire prevention problems within the area. It may not be necessary to have an extensive fire prevention effort in an area with a number of risks where the hazard is minimal and there are no real values threatened. In contrast, it will be important to have a comprehensive effort in an area where there is substantial RISK, a HIGH hazard, and HIGH values threatened.

The WPP addresses what needs to be accomplished in each prevention area, based on the types of activities and uses. It outlines what actions will take place, when, and who is responsible. Wildfire prevention activities generally fall within one of four broad categories. These categories include:

1. Education - Education is aimed at changing people's behavior by awareness and knowledge. This can be done through printed materials, mass media (radio, television, etc.), and one-on-one contacts or group presentations. Information can also be delivered through signs, displays, fairs, parades, etc.
2. Engineering - Engineering is an activity designed to reduce or eliminate fire risks (e.g. spark arrester) and hazards (e.g. developing defensible space around a home).
3. Enforcement - Enforcement is used to gain compliance with fire regulations and ordinances.
4. Administration - Activities such as Planning, Budgeting and Training.

This Wildfire Prevention Plan selects the most cost effective mix of activities to mitigate potential fire problems within NM-LCD. It identifies implementation levels which can be incorporated into the Fire Management Plan.

## **PURPOSE**

The Wildfire Prevention Plan will analyze the potential of wildfire impacts and provide planned actions, on a priority basis, for implementation by NM-LCD.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The District Manager is responsible for approving this Wildfire Prevention Plan as the District methodology to protect valuable resources from losses by wildfire.

The District Fire Management Officer is responsible for integrating this operational plan into the NM-LCD Fire Management Plan and ensuring that the actions called for are implemented. The District Manager has the authority to assign individual responsibilities within prevention areas.

The majority of fire prevention activities (outside of employee awareness and enforcement) are coordinated with adjacent federal agencies such as the Gila National Forest and the Lincoln National Forest.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The first phase is to assess the Risks, Hazards and Values. The assessment consists of three distinctly different steps. It is important that each step be conducted independently with no attempt to blend or combine any of them.

For each component, a relative rating of HIGH, MEDIUM, or LOW is assigned within each fire prevention area. These ratings are relative and not absolute.

Existing data was also used in the assessment evaluation. Within NM-LCD this includes:

1. History and location of person-caused fires.
2. Current and anticipated staffing.
3. Previous fire prevention and fire trespass plans.
4. District resource specialist and fire management personnel expertise.
5. Previous fire management plans.

## **RISKS**

Assessing the risk consists of evaluating the potential for wildfire ignition. Consideration, at this time, is NOT given to how, or if, a fire would spread or burn, once ignited. Concentrations of lightning and human activities that could start fires are identified.

For the purpose of the NM-LCD Wildfire Prevention Plan, the following risks were identified:

1. Lightning
2. Military ordnance.
3. Highway/Railroad.
4. Human activities in remote areas/recreation areas.
5. Urban Interface.

6. Illegal immigrants in US/Mexico border areas.

## **HAZARDS**

In fire prevention terminology, the word "Hazard" is used to describe the relationship between fuels and topography and must not be confused with how hazard is defined in other disciplines.

The Hazard assessment deals with identifying areas of similar fire behavior based on fuels and topography. Given a normal fire season, how intense, and at what rate of spread, would a wildfire normally burn? What is the resistance to control?

Hazard criteria used by NM-LCD are:

1. Fuels that would normally carry fire in accessible areas.
2. Fuels that would normally carry fire in inaccessible areas.
3. Fuels that would only carry fire in very high to extreme fire danger.

## **VALUES**

Values are defined as natural or developed areas on BLM land, where loss or destruction by wildfire would be detrimental to society.

Assessing values is a subjective process. During this process, an interdisciplinary approach was used. Specialists from the district office participated in developing the value component. A value component is determined and assigned to each fire prevention area.

Areas of obvious value are labeled HIGH. Other areas which have some value, but are less in relative comparison, are labeled as MEDIUM. These values were viewed as areas where wildfire would be detrimental to the natural and/or man-made resources. Everything else is considered LOW and wildfires may be acceptable and even beneficial in these areas.

Value considerations for the NM-LCD are:

### **HIGH VALUE**

1. Recreation Areas (Dripping Springs, La Cueva, Soledad, Aguirre Springs Campground, Three Rivers Campground, Lake Valley and Gila River Box).
2. Urban Interface Areas, most notably, BLM lands around the villages of Pinos Altos, Timberon, Bent, Silver City, Talavera Subdivision, Rodeo, Hillsboro, Lake Valley, Winston/Chloride and Monticello.

3. Communication Sites (Caballo Mountain, Jack's Peak, Sacramento Peak, Gillespie Peak, Pinos Altos Mountain, Magdalena Peak, Little Floridas, Big Hatchet Peak)

#### MEDIUM VALUE

1. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC's).
2. Military Use/Interface Areas (McGregor Range grazing allotments).

#### LOW VALUE

1. Wilderness Study Areas and designated wilderness areas
2. BLM grazing allotments

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Protect HIGH value resources from wildland fire.
2. Focus fire prevention activities in the high value areas of the District (Recreation Areas, Urban Interface Areas).
3. Minimize losses through effective implementation of the Wildfire Prevention Plan.

### **TASKS**

The following tasks have been identified as elements for this fire prevention program. These items require annual coordination to ensure a balanced, cost-effective fire management program. These tasks are designed to mitigate the highest potential losses that may result from wildfire.

Implementation of these tasks is dependent on the level of funding available. Each item has the budget level indicated to identify when the action should be taken. The following describes the different funding levels:

**MINIMUM LEVEL (Level 1)** - The prevention program necessary to accomplish the mandated public awareness activities. This level consists of all the prevention activities that a unit identifies as "must be done".

Public and employee fire prevention awareness training and ongoing NM-LCD fuels reduction programs.

**HISTORICAL LEVEL (Level 2)** - The prevention program that best represents the average prevention output for the period of years that the fire occurrence data is being considered.

Awareness training, ongoing fuels reduction programs, and prevention activities coordinated with interagency cooperators.

PLAN LEVEL (Level 3) - This is the level of prevention activities which focuses on preventing large and damaging fires and reducing cost/net value change. Activities include the following:

Employee and public awareness training, ongoing fuels reduction programs and prevention activities identified through interagency coordination. Also, the District FMO will oversee activities of Resource-Ordered and Detailed Fire Prevention Teams and/or individual prevention technicians to assist in distribution of press releases, posting information relating to fire restrictions and/or closures and school and civic presentations.

Some specific tasks for meeting the BLM's fire prevention objectives include:

Continue efforts in developing risk assessments and mitigation strategies to accomplish a professional fire prevention and fire management program.

Place emphasis on preventing fires in areas susceptible to high intensity fires.

Enforce fire prevention safeguards specified in permits and contracts. Identify uses that constitute significant risk and specify these uses.

Conduct aggressive investigations of all person-caused fires. The Incident Commander is responsible for requesting fire investigators, protecting the scene of origin and preserving evidence.

Continue working with all agencies and interested publics in a team effort to accomplish Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in areas of mutual concern.

Instill in all employees a responsibility for fire prevention.

Encourage public awareness through formal and informal public contacts. Be courteous and explain the role of fire management on lands within the Las Cruces District area and emphasize the adverse effects a careless person can have. Every effort should be made to enlist a visitor's cooperation, and each contact should leave the visitor with a positive image of the BLM and its' mission.

Some specific tasks for public education include:

Contact local schools and civic groups to schedule fire prevention/education programs and activities. Emphasize specific fire prevention methods and techniques to all participants and include the role of fire as a management tool and emphasize its benefit within ecosystems.

Utilize Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention (CFFP) materials to obtain the widest possible distribution among the public.

Encourage public participation in FIREWISE workshops in fire-prone communities.

Coordinate with the BLM NMSO and interagency cooperators to make personal contacts with local news media to facilitate fire prevention releases and to disseminate information on fire restrictions and closures.

Develop a fire prevention message to send to grazing permittees, residents, and cooperators. Include pertinent information on fire prevention and specifics on whom to contact to report a fire.

Develop a fire prevention exhibit for utilization at local fairs and exhibitions. Contact the Fire Management Officer or Assistant Fire Management Officer for assistance in developing themes and locating display material.

Open burning requires notification to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). Call or write to the following addresses:

For ***Dona Ana*** and ***Sierra*** Counties, contact:

NM Environment Dept.  
845 N Motel Blvd  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
(575) 647-7200

For ***Luna*** County, contact:

NM Environment Dept.  
805 Cody Road  
Deming, NM 88030  
(575) 546-7559

For ***Grant*** and ***Hidalgo*** Counties, contact:

NM Environment Dept.  
1302 E. 32 Street  
Silver City, NM 88062  
(575) 388-1934

For ***Otero*** County, contact:

NM Environment Dept.  
411 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Alamogordo, NM  
(575) 437-7115

NM-LCD notifies the NMED annually for all of its small burn projects (< 1 acre). The District needs to stress to permittees and residents that any burning they do on private land requires notification to NMED. Point out to individuals the consequences that an escaped fire can have and explain how they can be held legally and financially liable for damages. Make an effort to enlist the cooperation of permittees and residents to coordinate with their local fire departments when they want to do open burning.

Encourage them to check with their local fire departments, NM-LCD Fire Management Office, Alamogordo Dispatch or Silver City Dispatch to obtain information on predicted weather conditions and any unusual conditions that might affect the safe burning of debris.

Encourage private landowners to use sanitary landfills as much as possible. It is illegal to burn household trash in the State of New Mexico.

## **EVALUATION**

This WPP should be evaluated annually to ensure effective implementation of the planned actions.

The following questions are provided to assist in the evaluation process:

- A. Have the priority areas or actions changed? If so, the WPP must be amended to address changes in priority areas and/or the redefinition of the Fire Prevention Tasks.
- B. Are the task actions funded? If so, was the action completed? If not, the responsibilities and completion dates must be reevaluated and redefined.
- C. Have the task actions been successful? If not, the actions, responsibilities and completion dates must be reevaluated and redefined as appropriate.

## **Fire and Smoking Restrictions Plan**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Under certain prolonged extreme fire weather conditions, normal prevention and detection measures may be insufficient to reasonably reduce the risk of a major wildfire. When such conditions occur, it sometimes becomes necessary to implement Fire Restrictions. The purpose of this section is to give specific instructions and guidelines for implementing and managing these restrictions.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- A. To identify periods of extreme fire hazard and risk.
- B. To develop standards for the implementation of fire and smoking restrictions and specific area closure.
- C. To coordinate the implementation of fire restrictions as much as possible with adjacent agencies and National Forests.
- D. To develop working procedure for implementing:
  - a. Fire and Smoking Restrictions
  - b. Specific area closures

## **CRITERIA**

The Silver City Dispatch Center (SDC) monitors the representative National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) weather stations within the Las Cruces District. The Energy Release Component (ERC) indices are the basis for determining the fire danger and BLM preparedness levels. Using the current ERC values, the Las Cruces District Fire Management Officer, in consultation with the Gila/Las Cruces Zone Coordination Center will determine the appropriate Fire Prevention levels. The following criteria will be utilized to determine the prevention levels:

- A. During periods when the ERC 5-day average for the representative Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) is consistently below the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile, the BLM will implement normal fire prevention activities.
- B. When a drying trend has been established and the ERC 5-day average for the RAWS is between the 80 and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, the BLM will *consider implementing* fire and smoking restrictions, with exceptions.
- C. When the ERC 5-day average is above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, the BLM *will implement* fire and smoking restrictions, with exceptions.
- D. The criteria in A, B, and C are estimates of severity only, and should not become an automatic basis for the implementation of this plan.

## **PROCEDURES FOR APPROVAL**

- A. The Las Cruces District Manager will be consulted to ensure agreement and commitment.
- B. NM-LCD will maintain close contact with cooperating agencies and every effort will be made to ensure uniform and simultaneous action.
- C. NM-LCD will maintain close contact with the BLM State Office to ensure they will be kept current as to conditions and possible courses of action.
- D. The BLM State Fire Management Officer will be notified five days prior to the date fire restrictions are planned.

## **NM-LCD Wildland/Urban Interface Plan**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The BLM has expanded the scope of concern in the Wildland/Urban Interface to encompass all the possible problems that can, and most likely will occur. Current fuel loads, in some locations, are high compared to pre-settlement conditions. This condition is attributed to fire exclusion. Fire managers recognize that the Wildland/Urban Interface fire problem is also a social problem.

### **OBJECTIVE**

By taking an ecological approach to the Wildland/Urban Interface, NM-LCD will meet the needs of people and the environment in such a way that it will protect and maintain the natural resource in a diverse and stable condition, while providing enhanced fire protection to areas of human development.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

In order to have a successful Wildland/Urban Interface Plan, NM-LCD should:

- A. Continue effective communication and education outreach amongst all interested publics.
- B. Continue communication and strengthen teamwork for goal achievement with other government agencies.
- C. Take care of the land by actively engaging private landowners, land developers and other agencies in projects and programs that benefit wildlife and help to reduce wildfire threats in the WUI.
- D. Build strong partnerships with private landowners, conservation groups, fire departments, and other agencies through participation in groups that focus on wildfire issues.
- E. Continue to program agency dollars and schedule projects for fuels treatments in high priority areas as identified by CWPPs and the Fire Management Staff.