



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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News Release

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Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands to Implement Stage 2 Fire Restrictions

Albuquerque, NM – May 14, 2020 - The Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe National Forests will implement Stage 2 fire restrictions at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, May 20, 2020, to reduce the risk of human-caused wildfire based on current and forecasted conditions, including very low fuel moisture levels and severe fire weather conditions. The restrictions will also help protect the health and safety of firefighters and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The restrictions will be implemented forest-wide on the Carson and Santa Fe National Forests and on the Mount Taylor, Magdalena, Mountainair and Sandia Ranger Districts of the Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands.

New Mexico State Forestry implemented restrictions on campfires, open fires, smoking and fireworks on non-federal, non-municipal and non-tribal lands statewide on May 13 based on warmer temperatures, lower humidity, high winds and an abundance of dry, fine fuels.

Stage 2 fire restrictions prohibit:

- Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire.
- Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is cleared of vegetation and flammable material.
- Welding or operating an acetylene or other torch with open flame.
- Driving off designated roads. Visitors may park in areas cleared of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway, or in designated parking areas.
- Operating a chainsaw or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. The so-called "hoot owl" provision is a historic term that was used to notify woodcutters they could only cut during the morning hours when they could hear owls in the forest. Today, the restriction reduces the risk of an accidental fire start by mechanical equipment during the hottest, driest part of the day. Fuelwood permit holders may still collect wood as long as the chainsaws are off by 10 a.m.



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- Fireworks and other pyrotechnic devices are always prohibited on national forests.

While all three national forests are still welcoming visitors, fire indices are spiking and forest managers are concerned about this year's fire season with the added layer of complexity from COVID-19. The Stage 2 restrictions are a proactive way to reduce the very real risk of human-caused wildfire.

In addition to Stage 2 restrictions, fire managers are implementing several other measures in response to COVID-19 to keep firefighters safe from potential transmission on wildfire incidents. Mitigation includes social distancing when possible, spreading fire camps out over larger areas, screening and testing personnel, and identifying support functions that can be done virtually to reduce the number of people onsite.

Federal, state and local officers, members of an organized rescue team or firefighting force, and any others authorized by permit are exempt from the closure order. Other exemptions include:

- Residents, owners and leases of land within the boundaries of the Cibola National Forest, and holders of Forest Service recreation special use authorizations are exempt from the campfire ban if the fire is within a permanent structure.
- Generators with an approved spark arresting device, if used in an area cleared of all vegetation and flammable materials within 3 feet of the generator.
- Stoves and lanterns fueled by propane or other liquefied petroleum fuels that meet manufacturer's safety specifications and have on/off switches.

Forest visitors are asked to use extreme caution when fire restrictions are in place. Violations are punishable as a Class B misdemeanor by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for organizations and/or by imprisonment for not more than six months. The fire restrictions are in place until Dec. 31, 2020, unless rescinded earlier.

For additional information on COVID-19, go to <https://www.coronavirus.gov>. Information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is available at: www.usda.gov/coronavirus. Updates on the Cibola response to COVID-19 will also be posted on the [Cibola website](#), and [Facebook](#).

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