

Much of the Southwest is considered a high-hazard fire environment. Hot, dry, and windy conditions can greatly increase the likelihood of a wildland fire. High winds can quickly turn a small brush fire into a large wildland fire.

#### If Caught in the Open

- The best temporary shelter is in a sparse fuel area. On a steep mountainside, the back side is safer.
- Avoid natural features canyons, natural "chimneys" and saddles.
- If a road is nearby, lie face down along the road cut or in the ditch on the uphill side. Cover yourself with anything that will shield you from the fire's heat.
- If hiking in the back country, seek a depression with sparse fuel. Clear fuel away from the area while the fire is approaching and then lie face down in the depression and cover yourself. Stay down until after the fire passes!



## For More Information

Please contact the following agencies for more information about protecting your family from natural hazards:

Doña Ana County Local Emergency Planning Committee  
Office of Emergency Management  
1170 North Solano, Suite 0  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
(575) 647-7900  
[www.donaanalepc.com](http://www.donaanalepc.com)

Elephant Butte Irrigation District  
(575) 526-6671  
[www.ebid-nm.org/](http://www.ebid-nm.org/)

Doña Ana County Fire Marshal  
1170 North Solano, Suite 0  
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005  
(575) 647-7921  
[www.donaanacounty.org/fire/](http://www.donaanacounty.org/fire/)

City of Las Cruces Fire Department  
(575) 528-3131  
[www.las-cruces.org/fire/](http://www.las-cruces.org/fire/)

New Mexico Department of Transportation  
Roadway Conditions 1-800-432-4269  
<http://www.nmroads.com/>

National Weather Service El Paso/Santa Teresa  
[www.srh.noaa.gov/epz](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/epz)

American Red Cross  
Southwest New Mexico Chapter  
1301 East Griggs Avenue  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
(575) 526-2631  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Unless otherwise noted, the information in this brochure has been adapted from documents previously published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Southwest Fire Management Board.

June 2009

# Wildfires

## NATURAL HAZARDS Of Southern New Mexico

# Wildfires

Wildfires is a general term that may refer to brush fires, forest fires, or any other fires that can be caused by natural events or human activities.

## Create a Defensible Space

- Remove dead vegetation. Provide fuel-breaks around all structures.
- Reduce fuel sources by trimming dead or overhanging branches and clearing debris from the roof and gutters.
- Replace highly flammable vegetation with fire-resistant varieties.

## Reduce Risk

- Keep all flammable materials away from your home.
- Notify fire officials before legally burning debris.
- Burn debris in a cleared area.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Fully extinguish campfires.
- Install spark arresters on small engines and equipment.

## Protect Life and Property

- Plan emergency evacuation routes.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

- Listen to your radio for reports and evacuation information.
- Wear protective clothing—sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves, and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.
- If you have time, take steps to protect your home.
  - Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights and propane tanks.
  - Open fireplace damper and close fireplace screens.
  - Move flammable furniture into the center of the home.

## Defensible Space

A defensible space is the area between a house and an oncoming wildfire where vegetation has been modified to reduce the threat to the structure.

- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.
- Wet the roof and shrubs around the house.

## What to do During a Wildfire

### Survival in a Vehicle

- This is dangerous and should only be done in an emergency.
- Stay in your vehicle.
- Roll up windows and close air vents
- Drive slowly with headlights on.
- Do not drive through heavy smoke.
- If you have to stop, park away from the heaviest trees and brush.



Wildfire in Organ Mountains east of Las Cruces 2008