



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Office of Superintendent of Insurance
Alice T. Kane, Superintendent of Insurance

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**SAFETY FIRST: MECHANICAL, TOOL AND YARD MAINTENANCE FIRE
PREVENTION TIPS TO PRACTICE DURING WILDFIRE AWARENESS MONTH**

SANTA FE, N.M. – As of April 2026, many regions across New Mexico are under active fire restrictions due to high-risk seasonal conditions. With "hot work" – including welding, grinding, and metal cutting – identified as a primary cause of human-started wildfires, the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance (OSI) is reminding the public of steps they need to take to help protect our communities and natural resources.

While precautions related to tools and mechanical use may seem small, they can make all the difference during peak wildfire season. To mitigate sparks and potential fire this summer when using tools or mechanical equipment, remember these safety measures:

- **Avoid high-risk activities.** Welding, grinding, and the use of open-flame torches are generally prohibited in high-danger areas. In addition, portable generators must only be operated in a cleared area with a three-foot radius free of all flammable materials.
- **To minimize risk, schedule work for the early morning when temperatures are lower and humidity is higher.** For example, the safest time to mow grass is before 10 a.m. or during the cooler windows of three hours after sunrise or two hours before sunset. Never mow on hot, windy days or during Red Flag Warnings.
- **Implement spark mitigation when engaging in construction.** Clear all flammable vegetation and combustibles within a 10 to 35-foot radius of your workspace. The use of fire-resistant shields, welding blankets, and wetting down the work area is required to contain sparks and molten slag.
- **Ensure engine compliance.** All internal and external combustion engines, including chainsaws, generators, and weed trimmers, must feature a properly maintained, USDA-approved spark arrester.
- **Double-check equipment safety features.** Ensure all mowers and weed eaters are equipped with functional spark arresters. Avoid striking rocks with metal blades, as the resulting sparks can easily ignite dry vegetation.
- **Manage yard vegetation.** Beyond the immediate lawn, prune low tree branches and thin out timber to reduce the risk of "crown fires" that spread through treetops.

“While maintaining a tidy lawn and yard is a key part of wildfire preparedness, the equipment used can also pose a significant fire risk if not handled properly,” said Elouisa Tyler, Bureau

Chief, Consumer Assistance Bureau, Civil Investigations Bureau, OSI. “As residents are sprucing up their properties this summer, it is critical that the public follow these guidelines to prevent accidental ignitions. We encourage residents to check with their local municipality or the state forestry division for specific fire restrictions before beginning any high-risk outdoor projects.”

For more information about wildfire preparedness and insurance resources from OSI, visit [this page](#).

For more information about wildfire prevention and defensible space from New Mexico’s Forestry Division (EMNRD) visit [this page](#).

***Media Note:** In-person interviews are available in Santa Fe. Virtual interviews via Teams and phone interviews are also available.*

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About the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance

The Office of the Superintendent of Insurance (OSI) is New Mexico’s regulatory agency responsible for overseeing a wide range of insurance products, including private health and life insurance, auto, home, business, and title insurance. Bureaus within OSI that assist with disaster and wildfire-related insurance are the Property and Casualty Bureau – which reviews and renders determinations on property and casualty rates, rules, and form filings – and the Consumer Assistance Bureau, which has specialized knowledge in the insurance claims and complaint process and assists consumers with their insurance disputes, as well as educates consumers for a better understanding of their policies and coverages.