



New Mexico Live Burn Demonstration Shows How Wildfire Mitigation Works Best as a System

Richburg, S.C. & Socorro, N.M., October 7, 2026 – The New Mexico State Fire Marshal’s Office, in collaboration with the New Mexico Office of Superintendent of Insurance (OSI) and the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), hosted a live fire demonstration showcasing the effectiveness of science-backed mitigation actions required to achieve a Wildfire Prepared Home designation.

The event brought together fire-service leaders, insurance professionals, researchers, policymakers, and community stakeholders to observe a live, side-by-side comparison of two homes exposed to wildfire conditions. One structure meets the IBHS Wildfire Prepared Home standard, while the other includes only partial mitigation measures and common features that can leave homes more vulnerable to wildfire.

“Being proactive about protecting our homes from wildfires is the best way for New Mexicans to minimize their damages before a fire happens,” said Maj. Gen. Miguel Aguilar, cabinet secretary of the NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the State Fire Marshal’s Office. “Bringing partners together for demonstrations like these help make preparedness visible and show how a few simple choices can lower the risks from wildfires.”

The demonstration highlights how wildfire risk is shaped by a combination of building features and conditions surrounding the home. The partially mitigated structure included a Class A roof and windows that meet wildland-urban interface (WUI) code requirements, while the Wildfire Prepared Home structure incorporated additional protections such as noncombustible siding, ember-resistant vents, enclosed eaves, and a well-maintained noncombustible zone in the first five feet around the home. Rather than focusing on a single upgrade, the side-by-side comparison is designed to demonstrate that wildfire mitigation works best as a system. While individual improvements can reduce risk, IBHS research shows that meaningful protection is achieved when multiple mitigation measures work together to address potential ignition pathways from embers, radiant heat, and direct flame contact.

“Wildfire does not test one feature at a time, and homeowners cannot rely on a single upgrade,” said IBHS CEO Roy Wright. “This demonstration makes the science visible and gives New Mexico homeowners a clear path to action. Bringing the right protections together through Wildfire Prepared Home can meaningfully reduce a home’s vulnerability.”

Wildfire risk is a reality for communities across New Mexico, making mitigation decisions increasingly important for homeowners, community leaders, and insurers alike.

“By understanding how homes ignite and which vulnerabilities matter most, residents can make more informed decisions to protect their property and strengthen community resilience,” said New Mexico Superintendent of Insurance Alice Kane. “As always, OSI stands ready to assist New Mexicans who are in wildfire-prone areas before, during, and after disaster strikes. It’s critical that residents take steps on the front end to mitigate their home and property – and this demonstration shows in real-time just how important it is to follow IBHS home mitigation standards.”



The live burn is designed to translate years of wildfire research into a visual, real-world demonstration. By showing how homes respond to the same fire conditions when they have various levels of mitigation, the event aims to help homeowners, community leaders, and insurers better understand the actions that can reduce wildfire risk.

"Insurance plays an essential role in recovery, but reducing damage before a disaster strikes benefits everyone," said Carole Walker, executive director, Rocky Mountain Insurance Association. "The science-based, meaningful wildfire mitigation standards provided by IBHS Wildfire Prepared Home give homeowners practical, effective ways to improve their home's resilience and insurability."

To learn more about the Wildfire Prepared Home program and how to participate, visit wildfireprepared.org.

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About the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS)

The IBHS mission is to conduct objective, scientific research to identify and promote effective actions that strengthen homes, businesses and communities against natural disasters and other causes of loss. Learn more about IBHS at ibhs.org.

About Wildfire Prepared Home

Wildfire Prepared Home is a science-based wildfire mitigation designation program developed by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety. Grounded in the latest IBHS wildfire research, the program provides New Mexico homeowners with a clear, research-informed pathway to implement measures intended to reduce a home's vulnerability to wildfire, including wind-driven embers. Learn more at wildfireprepared.org.

About the New Mexico Office of Superintendent of Insurance (OSI)

The Office of Superintendent of Insurance 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.

About the New Mexico State Fire Marshal's Office

The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) protects the lives and property of New Mexicans from the devastating effects of fire through promotion of public safety and fire prevention programs, as well as resources distributed to the New Mexico fire departments for fire protection services.

About the Rocky Mountain Insurance Association (RMIA)

RMIA is a non-profit consumer information organization that represents property & casualty insurers in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. RMIA has been serving consumers and the media since 1952. Learn more at rmiia.org.