



Prescribed Burning Includes Brief Periods of Smoke to Build Long-Term Fire Resilience

In New Mexico, fall marks the start of prescribed burning season, when cooler weather and higher moisture create the right conditions for this important land management tool. Prescribed fire helps reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, and lessen the intensity of future wildfires. While carefully planned burns produce less smoke than wildfires and can even reduce the risk of long-lasting smoke events, they may still temporarily affect air quality.

Like wildfires, prescribed fires produce smoke that can affect human health, but prescribed fire smoke is not the same as wildfire smoke. Prescribed burns are carefully planned and must meet air-quality standards designed to limit impacts on nearby communities. Smoke from these burns is usually confined to the immediate area, whereas wildfire smoke can rise into the upper atmosphere, travel long distances, and affect far more people. Prescribed burns also consume less biomass (organic fuel) than wildfires, which means they generally produce less smoke. And unlike wildfire smoke, which may include harmful particles from burned homes, vehicles, and hazardous materials, prescribed fire smoke comes only from vegetation.

Home air filtration systems can reduce the particulate load from smoke inside your home. If you lack a portable air purifier, you can make your own [box fan filtration unit](#). If you must be outside during a smoke event, the tips to the right will help reduce your exposure and health impacts.

TIPS

- Stay hydrated. Adequate hydration keeps your airway lubricated.
- Use N95 or P100 respirators. Cloth, surgical, or dust masks will not keep out ozone or particulate matter.
- If possible, reduce strenuous activities, and take frequent breaks indoors to limit smoke inhaled.
- While driving in a vehicle, close windows/vents and use the air conditioner on “recirculate” mode.



Prescribed broadcast burn in 2016 on NM State Land Office land in Black Lake, NM.

ACTION ITEMS

Numerous burns are planned or are currently underway across the state. The best way to prepare for wildfire or prescribed fire smoke is to stay informed with accurate, up-to-date information on fire activity.

- For updates on burns in your area, visit [nmfireinfo.com](https://www.nmfireinfo.com).
- To view current and upcoming prescribed fires, visit [NM Current Wildfire Information](#).
- For real-time air quality information, go to fire.airnow.gov.

The [Forest Stewards Guild](#) and [FACNM](#) are working with [BLM-New Mexico](#), [New Mexico Forestry Division](#), [New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute](#), and others to continue a consistent wildfire preparedness message, sharing across multiple platforms, including social media, webinars and community events.