



NEW MEXICO EMNRD FORESTRY DIVISION

Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Fact Sheet

FY24 Distribution

Forestry Division State Forester and US Forest Service endeavor to:

- Organize, train, and equip fire departments in unprotected rural areas and rural communities.
- Assist qualifying fire departments in saving lives and protecting property in unprotected or inadequately protected rural areas.
- Prevent or reduce loss of life, protect financial investments, and enhance environmental quality to revitalize rural America.

Funding Agency

The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA FS) Southwest Region 3 provides this grant through New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources – Forestry Division that funds equipment and training grants through the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant. This grant provides volunteer fire departments financial, technical, and related assistance to organize, train and equip local firefighters for the protection of rural areas and communities of 10,000 persons or less. These grants require applicants meet the eligibility criterion and pass a competitive and technical review of equipment and supply requests.

Eligibility Criteria

- Provides service **primarily** to a community or city with a population of less than 10,000. (Latest census)
- Is recognized as a fire department by the laws of the State
- Firefighting personnel is 80 percent or more volunteer
- The community share (10% match) of the financial assistance must be available at the time of application.
Applicants may not derive their share from other sources of Federal assistance.
- Maximum per grant award will be \$20,000.00 for equipment/PPE/training.
A Wildland Coordinator position grant maximum is \$24,999.00.
The Wildland Coordinator position **may** be awarded for 2 years.
Cost of \$4,999 or less for a single item.
Wildland boots or footwear is not allowed.
- Starting in 2023 (FY24) Vendor Quotes are required for all equipment and supply requests

Applicants meeting the identified Eligibility Criteria listed above are encouraged to apply.

VFA GRANT CONTACT INFORMATION

For grant policy or procedural questions, contact Gabriel Cordova, VFA Coordinator by telephone at 505-629-2041 or Email: gabrielf.cordova@emnrd.nm.gov.

VFA GRANT APPLICATIONS

Applications available from your Forestry Division District Office Fire Management Officer or on-line at: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/requests-for-proposals-and-grants/>.

IMPORTANT DATES

- *Application Period: August 21, 2023–September 29, 2023 (40-day application period). *Request for Applications (RFA) will be published in the Albuquerque Journal Sunday August 20, 2023.
- Peer Reviews: October 2023 (Projected review dates.)
- Award Notification: November/ December 2023
- Denial Reconsideration Period and Equipment Substitution Request: December 2023
- Notice To Proceed: January 2024
- Purchase Period: February - November 2024
- *Extensions will no longer be available due to extending the deadline from December to April.
- Reimbursement Requests Deadline: April 30, 2025

FY23 VFA GRANT AWARDS

COLFAX COUNTY	\$14,500.00
VILLAGE OF CUBA	\$18,257.96
CURRY COUNTY	\$8,392.51
CURRY COUNTY	\$16,718.42
CURRY COUNTY	\$17,132.51
CURRY COUNTY	\$11,577.51
CURRY COUNTY	\$8,487.51
GUADALUPE COUNTY	\$5,001.10
LINCOLN COUNTY	\$12,892.30
LINCOLN COUNTY	\$10,005.79
LINCOLN COUNTY	\$7,079.42
OTERO COUNTY	\$19,000.00
OTERO COUNTY	\$20,000.00
SIERRA COUNTY	\$20,000.00
TAOS COUNTY	\$20,000.00
TAOS COUNTY	\$8,980.20
TAOS COUNTY	\$20,000.00
TAOS COUNTY	\$20,000.00
VILLAGE OF ANGEL FIRE	\$24,999.00
TOWN OF COCHITI LAKE	\$24,999.99
COLFAX COUNTY	\$24,999.00
VILLAGE OF CUBA	\$24,999.99
DONA ANA COUNTY	\$24,999.00
CITY OF RIO COMMUNITIES	\$24,999.00
CITY OF SANTA ROSA	\$24,999.99
SIERRA COUNTY	\$24,999.99
TAOS COUNTY	\$24,999.00
UNION COUNTY	\$24,999.99
RIO ARRIBA COUNTY	\$20,000.00
RIO ARRIBA COUNTY	\$6,172.73
TOWN OF MESILLA	\$15,691.86
VALENCIA COUNTY	\$19,459.38
	\$589,344.15



FY24 VFA SUCCESS STORY



Valencia County Fire Department

Valencia County Fire Department is comprised of 6 volunteer fire districts with 8 fire stations across the county. Valencia Fire Department Chief Matt Propp, Deputy Chief Casey Davis, Assistant Chief Jaime Gonzales, and Wildland Captain Rob Barr, oversee Valencia County's fire response.



Jarales/Pueblitos/Bosque, Los Chavez, Manzano Vista, Meadowlake, and Tome-Adelino Fire Districts service an area of 1,068 square miles or 683,623 acres with an average elevation of 4,849 feet. Much of Valencia County's fuel type is designated as dry rangeland, while the rest is agricultural land, and the Rio Grande splits the county with its typical bosque (forest) some areas having had fuels reduction and invasive species removal projects completed in the past. Bosque and rangeland fires are common, from small to large destructive, wind driven fires causing loss

of homes, recreation, sensitive plant and animal species. Fire damaged cottonwood trees becomes especially hazardous to firefighters and the public.

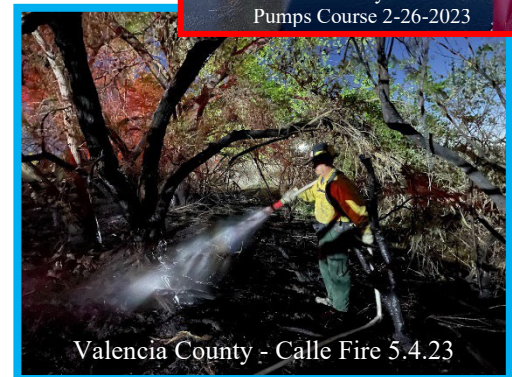
The 2003 New Mexico Legislature created the New Mexico Fire Planning Task Force to identify the state's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas most vulnerable to wildland fires. In the 2022 Communities at Risk Assessment Plan (CARS) report Valencia County communities ranked: **13** HIGH RISK, **0** communities ranked MODERATE RISK and **5** communities rank as LOW RISK

The objectives of the 2018 Valencia County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) are:

- To educate residents regarding wildfire risk and shared responsibility.
- To reduce fuel loading around our homes, infrastructure, communities, and forests.
- To decrease structural ignitibility of our homes, business, and buildings.
- To manage forested areas to promote forest health and foster resilience.



Valencia County - VFA S-211
Pumps Course 2-26-2023



Valencia County - Calle Fire 5.4.23

Several local fuels mitigation projects have been identified in the Valencia County 2018 Community Wildfire Protection Plan update.

"Valencia County Fire Department and its rural fire districts have been applying for the VFA grant for several years and has been fortunate enough to receive awards several times. The VFA Grant Program is an essential part of the VCFD Wildland Program. It has helped us build the program and improve every year. We have been submitting grants annually with the first one in 2008. We have used the grant funding for wildland coordinator position, which we implemented 3 years in a row from 2011-2013. This led to Valencia County creating a Wildland Captain permanent position. We have used grant funding for line packs and fire shelters, PPE, tools, chainsaws, and water handling equipment including portable pumps, hose, appliances."

writes Rob Barr, Wildland Captain, Valencia County Fire department.



EMNRD NEW MEXICO FORESTRY DIVISION VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT for **Wildland Fire Coordinator**

This Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant is available to county and municipal fire departments who *qualify. A reimbursable grant up to \$24,999.00, invoiceable every calendar quarter and will augment salary for wildland fire coordinator position. An Invoice and Project Tracking Excel Workbook will be provided to assist and guide the coordinator. *See the attached FY24 VFA Grant Fact Sheet for qualifying criteria.

This position is responsible for implementation of county wildland fire management activities with federal, state and local government agencies, having responsibility for wildland fire management. This effort will require coordination efforts with county/municipal/tribal fire departments and community organizations, federal, state and local government agencies having responsibility for wildland fire management, including the appropriate inter-agency dispatch center.

EXAMPLES OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED

- **use or create Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** to develop fire protection policies and ordinances that will meet the objectives of the CWPP. Participate in wildland/urban interface assessment planning and assist in coordinating projects in communities at risk as defined within the county and in coordination with Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department – Forestry Division and other federal, state and local government agencies and the public.
- **work with county fire chief and volunteer department chiefs** to develop policies, guidelines, regulations and ordinances, pertaining to wildfire fire management and prevention, county-wide and within volunteer department response areas;
- **make recommendations** to the fire chief's various performance- based ideas and settings for the proper and efficient operations of the office as it pertains to wildfire protection, planning or other aspects of wildfire operations;
- **serve as liaison** to the Forestry Division in the event of a wildland fire within the county; this includes education, training, recovery and response;
- **coordinate wildland fire management activities** and participate in wildland/urban interface assessment planning and assist in coordinating projects in communities at risk as identified in the CWPP with the Forestry Division and other federal, state and local government agencies and the public.
- **participate in the New Mexico Resource Mobilization Plan** coordinating group's annual meeting. Create a red card system for county fire fighters and departments in conjunction with the Incident Qualification System.

*For a complete list of Wildland Fire Coordinator tasks see attached Job Description.

The FY24 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Request for Applications begins on Monday August 21, 2023 develop and implement countywide standards for wildland and structural firefighting training to make fire fighters aware of safety issues and improve their performance;

For grant policy or procedural questions, contact Gabriel Cordova, VFA Coordinator by telephone at 505-629-2041 or Email: gabrielf.cordova@emnrd.nm.gov.

VFA Wildland Coordinator Success story

By Chris Romo, Wildland Coordinator for the Angel Fire-Fire Department

Hello my name is Chris Romo and I am the Wildland Coordinator for the Angel Fire-Fire Department. I started this position in March 2022 and the position was partially funded by the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant made available by the USDA Forest Service to help communities protect themselves from catastrophic wildland fires. The EMNRD Forestry Division administers the Grant and appoints a Grant Manager from their State Office. This Grant helped the Village of Angel Fire know the importance of having a Wildland Coordinator for the Municipality and the surrounding area. It helped our Interagency partners by providing someone who specializes in Wildland and alleviates the duties from the Fire Chief.



Pics from Gonzalitos RX on the UU Bar Ranch. This treatment was for meadow restoration and elk habitat.

This year we were awarded the Wildfire Risk Reduction Program for Rural Communities Grant through New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in order to purchase a pull-behind wood chipper. Furthermore, we put in for a 550K National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC-BLM) Grant to create a Fuels crew to thin, burn and chip hazardous vegetation and materials within Angel Fire. We were able to Inventory and maintenance all our Wildland Equipment and Slash Equipment and are currently going to establish SOP's for our Division and create JHA's for every piece of Slash equipment that includes Heavy Equipment, Wood Chippers/Grinders and our 2-Air Curtain Incinerators (ACI) Units. Our Village codes are being updated to better fit our Wildfire Risk and Hazardous Fuel loading within the Village and we are currently working closely with our Fire Adaptive Board and our Council to find innovative ideas to combat our Hazardous Fuels issues in and around the Village and surrounding area.



The guys gave a tour to LT. Governor, Howie Morales and Congresswoman, Teresa Leger Fernandez during the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Incident.



The guys after a successful 750-acre broadcast burn on the UU Bar Ranch (Spring of 2022)

Since I started I have hired and trained over 20 firefighters and provided training to adjacent fire departments. We are thinning, picking up slash from residents within Angel Fire and chipping/burning the slash. We generated over a million dollars for the Village last year with Grants and Wildland Fire deployments. We were actively engaged during the Calf Canyon/ Hermits Peak Incident in 2022 and were able to send multiple fire engines out of State to aid with Wildfire Suppression. With the amount of revenue, we generated we were able to keep staff working longer, purchase a new Command Unit as well as various tools equipment, radios and Personal protective equipment (PPE). Due to the great involvement with the Slash Program within the Village the duties were transferred to the Wildland Division from our Solid Waste predecessors. In addition, we got a Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) updated last year and are working to fire harden the Neighborhood that were depicted as Very High to High At-Risk Neighborhoods to Wildfire. We also were able to complete our New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Grant commitments as it pertains to the following projects that included Training & Education, National Incident Management System (NIMS), Presentations at local Schools, tools and equipment, Home Hazard Assessments, Physical Conditioning and various other career development learning opportunities.



Colfax Mutual Aid Group comprised of 189 resources from Colfax County and California at briefing lead by Chris Romo.

NM Forestry Division offers free Wildland Fire Suppression Trainings coordinated by the local Forestry Division District Office. Offered annually, September through May, courses such as the RT-130 Annual Wildland Firefighter Safety Refresher, Basic Wildland Fire Fighting (S-130/S-190/L-180), S-211 Pump Operations and many of the other NWCG courses. These courses are funded by Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grants and provide professional qualified instructors and course materials.

Send us pictures of your VFA Grant purchases along with your fire departments success stories. Contact: VFA Coordinator Gabriel Cordova Gabrielf.Cordova@EMNRD.NM.GOV.

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Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
(2) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

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