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CARING FOR NEW MEXICO

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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

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Crisis Lines Available to Answer Questions about Health Concerns due to Wildfires

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health is reminding residents that there are toll free numbers they can call to discuss health-related or mental health concerns due to wildfires burning in New Mexico. People who have questions about health-related issues due to smoke can call the New Mexico Nurse Advice Line at 1-877-725-2552. People who want to talk to a mental health professional can call 1-866-HELP-1-NM.

“The wildfires burning in New Mexico can have an adverse affect on both your physical and mental health, so I want to remind everyone that there are resources to help people in need,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres said. “Smoke can cause health concerns for anyone, but especially for people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, emphysema, and cardiovascular disease. It is perfectly normal right now to feel anxiety. Our friends and neighbors were forced to evacuate, and many had to make decisions in minutes on where to go, when to leave and what to bring with them. We should not underestimate the effects that evacuation and displacement can have on our friends and families.”

The Department of Health is also reminding residents to be aware of the air quality in areas affected by the wildfires. Visibility can serve as a good substitute in determining air quality. People should use the following guide to determine air quality from visibility: If visibility is 10 miles and up, the air quality is good; six to nine miles, air quality is moderate; three to five miles, air quality is unhealthy for sensitive people; one and a half to two and a half miles, air quality is unhealthy; one to one and a quarter miles, air quality is very unhealthy; and three quarters of a mile or less, air quality is hazardous.

The procedure for making personal observation to determine smoke concentrations is as follows:

- Face away from the sun.
- Determine the limit of your visibility range by looking for targets at known distances. Visible range is that point at which even the high contrast objects totally disappear.
- After determining visibility in miles, use the chart to determine the appropriate visibility category.

For more information about the health effects related to smoke from wildfires, go online to <http://nmhealth.org/eheb/index.shtml>. For more information about fires in New Mexico go online to <http://nmfireinfo.wordpress.com>.



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