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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**November 15, 2021**

**Application Deadline is November 16 for the New Mexico  
Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Program**

*More than \$200,000 awarded to rural fire departments in 2021*

**Santa Fe, NM** – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division reminds the public that the deadline to apply to the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Program is 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2021. Rural fire departments from across the state can use the funding to help protect their communities from catastrophic wildfire.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), volunteer fire departments makeup 70 percent of the firefighting force across the nation and protect 50 percent of the population. Many of the women and men who volunteer are also doing it part-time and have other jobs. The focus of VFA funding is to strengthen the local government's organizational capability to respond to wildland fire, including training, equipment, and fire prevention resources.

In 2021, 17 rural fire departments received \$214,573 in funding through the VFA Program. The Laguna Vista Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) in Rio Arriba County is one of the many success stories. The department used \$19,000 in grant money to purchase personal protective equipment for firefighters, supplies to equip fire engines, and two large Smokey Bear signs to alert drivers of current fire danger levels.

“Volunteer fire departments are a vital part of New Mexico’s Resource Mobilization Plan,” said State Fire Management Officer Vernon Muller. “They are the first line of defense in the battle against wildfires as they start. Without these brave women and men volunteering their time, it

would take much longer for resources to reach fires, which could lead to larger, more destructive, and potentially deadly incidents. They deserve our gratitude and support.”

Funding for the VFA Program is provided by the USDA Forest Service (USFS). To qualify, each VFA recipient, or local government representing multiple fire departments, must serve rural communities with populations of 10,000 or less and provide a cost-share of 10 percent using state or local funds.

The application period began October 17 and ends by 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 16. If you need assistance, call your local Forestry Division District office. Applications may also be obtained via email from Robert Brown, Program Coordinator, at [Robert.Brown@state.nm.us](mailto:Robert.Brown@state.nm.us).



*New Smokey Bear fire danger sign off Shroyer Drive and Highway 95 in Laguna Vista, NM.*

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*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

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