



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
**Department of Homeland Security and
Emergency Management**

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**DHSEM and Army Engineers provide flood prevention training in
Southern NM**

Training comes as wildfire season increases the danger of flash floods

Santa Fe, NM – This weekend, officials from the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) Recovery Team will partner with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to instruct residents in Otero County and the Mescalero Apache Tribe on a critical tactic for preventing flood damage. In this condensed version of a three-day USACE course, residents will learn proper techniques for filling and placing sandbags.

“The use of sandbags is a simple but effective way to prevent or reduce flood water damage,” said **Otero County Emergency Manager Matthew Clark**. “Properly filled and placed sandbags can act as a barrier to divert moving water around, instead of through, buildings. And if we prepare today, we’ll be ready when the rains come.”

Training events will take place from 10am-12pm on Friday May 14th at the Mescalero Conservation Department and from 10am-12pm on Saturday May 15th at the Otero County Road Shop. No registration is required.

This training is especially important amid forecasts of a highly active wildfire season. Wildfires dramatically change landscape and ground conditions, which can lead to a greater risk of flooding because the burned ground is unable to absorb the falling rain, producing runoff conditions much like a parking lot. As a result, even modest rainstorms over a burned area can result in flash flooding downstream. These floodwaters can also transport surface debris such as downed trees, boulders, and gravel.

To prepare for these events, the USACE has asked DHSEM to help deliver more than 500,000 sandbags across the state.

“Our department is proud to help deliver practical tools and flood mitigation training to New Mexico communities,” said **DHSEM Secretary Bianca Ortiz-Wertheim**. “We are grateful to the Army Corps of Engineers, as well as our County and Tribal partners, for

helping to organize these events, and I encourage anyone in the Otero and Mescalero areas to show up for this vital training. Planning ahead and preparing for these types of emergencies can make all the difference when disaster strikes.”

“Having full community participation is incredibly important,” added Matthew Clark. “Let’s prepare as a community and help our neighbors while protecting our properties.”

For more information on the possible threats after a wildfire and the steps New Mexicans can take to be prepared, please visit www.afterwildfirenm.org. Additionally, information on flood insurance through The National Flood Insurance Program is available at www.floodsmart.gov. While there is typically a 30-day waiting period for an NFIP insurance policy to go into effect, this wait can be waived in the event of flooding after a wildfire.

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DHSEM works to protect the people of New Mexico and the nation through a comprehensive and coordinated program of mitigating hazards, preparing for emergencies, preventing attacks, and recovering from disasters.