

MORA COUNTY

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

2005

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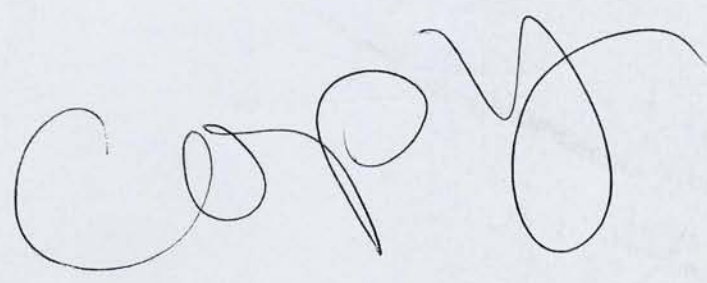
MORA COUNTY

COMMUNITY

WILDFIRE

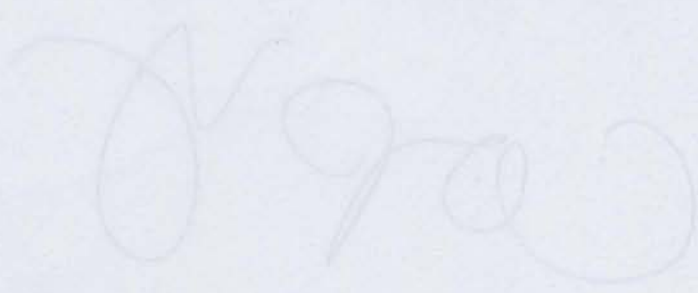
PROTECTION

PLAN

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MORA COUNTY
COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN
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MORA COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

In accordance with the requirements and guidelines set forth in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003, the land management agencies and entities represented herein, have agreed to address the challenges of wildfire hazard risk reduction and forest health within Mora County. This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) represents a collaborative effort to address hazard mitigation, structure protection and community preparedness.

COLLABORATION

Formal community-based wildfire hazard risk management planning and prioritization began on August 13, 1999 with the establishment of the *Mora County Fire Chief's Association*. The Chief's Association meets once a month with a representative from each of the ten fire districts within the County, State Forestry, a representative from the local County Commission, the Emergency Management Officer, private landowners, and other interest groups. The group discussed fire hazard mitigation, fire protection planning projects, addresses communication needs, funding options, training requirements and public outreach and education. The collaborative group has identified numerous values at risk including public and emergency responder safety, community infrastructure, property, watershed productivity, recreational opportunities, woody products, wildlife habitat, ecosystem health, aesthetics and historical sites. As a result of the Chief's Association's efforts, Mora County was able to contract with SEC Inc. to prepare a Wildland-Urban Interface Plan which was completed in June 2002. The WUI Plan clearly defines the Priority WUI areas in the county, fire hazard reduction strategies, management recommendations and implementation.

Partners with the *Mora County Fire Chief's Association* Include:

Santa Fe National Forest

Carson National Forest

EMNRD State Forestry Las Vegas District

Mora County

Mora County Commission

Mora County Planning and Zoning

Mora County Office of Emergency Management

Western Mora Soil and Water Conservation District

Mora Mutual Water and Sewer Association

Mora Volunteer Fire Department

Ledoux/El Carmel/Monte Aplanado Volunteer Fire Department

Buena Vista Volunteer Fire Department

Ocate/Ojo Feliz Volunteer Fire Department

Rainsville Volunteer Fire Department

Cleveland/Holman/Encinal/Tramperos Volunteer Fire Department

Chacon Volunteer Fire Department

Golondrinas Volunteer Fire Department

Guadalupita Volunteer Fire Department

Watrous Volunteer Fire Department

La Jicarita Enterprise Community

Natural Resource Coordinator

Watershed Coordinator

New Mexico State Fire Marshal

SEC Inc.

The Wilson Group

PRIORTIZED FUEL REDUCTION

Mora County is located in northwest New Mexico and occupies a land area of approximately 1,932 square miles. The landscape is very diverse, ranging from grassland plains in the eastern and central portions of the County to mountain forests and high country alpine lands in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. In general, heavily stocked forests, steep canyons, strong winds and semi-arid conditions describe the conditions of the mountainous lands.

Land ownership in the County is predominantly private, with 1,643 square miles or 85 percent of the land classified as private. The remaining ownership includes public and State lands which comprises 289 square miles or 15 percent of the County. As a result this CWPP will address the needs on private-owned lands.

Mora County has been identified on the Governor's 2005 *New Mexico Communities at Risk Plan*. Within Mora County, eleven WUI subdivisions have been rated as having a moderate or high fire hazard:

Subdivision	Fire Hazard rating Low, moderate, high or extreme
Chacon	High
Cleveland	High
Gascon	High
Guadalupita	High
Holman	High
Ledoux	High
Mora	High
Ocate	High
La Cueva	Moderate
Rainsville	Moderate
Ojo Feliz	Moderate

Each individual community's property owners within the County is encouraged to continue to seek funding and implement projects within their jurisdiction. Emphasis will be placed on those properties within the eleven WUI subdivisions, while all high hazard forested areas, regardless of location, will eventually be considered for treatment. Prioritization of watershed management issues will also be addressed when considering treatment areas.

Treatment goals:

1. Subdivision Defensible Space

The top priority for fuels reduction work is to focus efforts on defensible space for individual homes within the subdivisions. Defensible space is that area between a home and an oncoming wildfire where the vegetations has been cleared or modified to reduce the wildfire hazard. In some cases, defensible space can also provide an opportunity for firefighters to defend a home. The

defensible space recommendations, is the top priority because the infrastructure (access roads, etc.) within most of the subdivisions is partly responsible for the high subdivision fire hazard ratings, and defensible space is lacking around many homes. Modification of these infrastructure "problems" is not very probable due to planning and cost constraints; however, assuming homeowner willingness, defensible space problems can be treated. Furthermore, while defensible space is no guarantee that a home will survive a wildfire, studies have shown that when done properly, it significantly improves the odds. Recommended Guidelines can be found in the New Mexico State Forestry publication entitled *Living with Fire-A guide for the Homeowner* or by contacting New Mexico State Forestry directly.

2. Fuelbreaks

The second priority for fuels reduction work is to create fuelbreaks;

- Immediately adjacent to a subdivision's outer perimeter of homes
- Around designated watershed area
- Around other developments, infrastructure or identified values
- In tactically selected areas that may reduce the threat of wind driven fires

A fuelbreak is a strategically located block or strip of land in which cover of dense, heavy or flammable vegetation has been permanently changed to one of lower fuel volume and reduced flammability. Like defensible space, a well designed fuelbreak may provide an area in which firefighters can attempt to stop an oncoming fire.

FIRE PROTECTION

Mora County is divided into eleven fire districts;

Buena Vista, Rainsville, Ocate, Mora, C.H.E.T., Chacon, L.M.C., Golondrinas, Watrous, Guadalupita and the Village of Wagon Mound.

Each fire district has at least one Volunteer Fire Department, the Ocate, Watrous and C.H.E.T. fire districts each have a substation and Guadalupita has two main stations. Each district shares the responsibility of initial attack within their district with EMNRD State Forestry¹. Each district also has Automatic Aid agreements² with each of its neighboring districts, with the Village of Wagon Mound being the exception. The Watrous Fire Department has initial attack responsibility for the Fort Union National Park.³

The New Mexico State Fire Marshal's Office funds each of the departments based on their ISO rating using Fire Fund Monies. Each of the departments is currently rated as a Class 9, which allows them an operating budget of \$32,500 a year plus an additional \$12,836 for substations. This is the only annual operating budget currently available to the departments and the funding is based on the departments fire preparedness for structure fires. The department receives recognition for attending wildland training but not for response to wildland fires. This has created quite a dilemma for the department due to the fact that county-wide each district receives more calls to wildfires than to structure fires. In order for a department's annual operating budget to be increased, their ISO rating must be improved. With an improved ISO rating the homeowners within that geographic location are eligible for lower Homeowner's Fire Insurance Premiums. With an increased operating budget comes, theoretically, an improvement in the fire department's protection, response and preparedness. In an attempt to help facilitate an improved ISO rating, the NM State Fire Marshal conducted a Needs Assessment⁴ for each of the fire departments, which are included in the appendix of this plan. Each Fire Chief, with the guidance of the NM State Forestry Fire Management Officer, is responsible for evaluating the needs of their district's wildland need and for locating and securing funding to meet those needs.

All the Mora County Volunteer Fire Departments have partnered with the NM State Fire Marshal's Office and NM State Forestry and are committed to providing the best possible fire protection to the residents of Mora County while also providing for fire personnel safety.

1. Appendix 1: Forestry Division Joint Powers Agreement with Mora County for Wildfire Suppression
2. Appendix 2: Automatic Aid Agreements between VFDs
3. Appendix 3: MOU between National Park Service and Watrous VFD
4. Appendix 4: State Fire Marshal's Office Needs Assessments for each VFD

Mora County
Forest Wildfire Hazard
Vegetation Types

Vegetation	Area	Percent	Wildfire Hazard	Mitigation
Grasslands	1,077 mi ²	56%	Most grassland fires are relatively easy to suppress because per acre fuel quantities are low and the fuels burn quickly. Fire spread to structures by embers from the flaming front are usually limited and direct flame contact is usually required. The vastness of the County's plains lengthens response time for firefighters and the fast moving nature of these fires makes it difficult to defend numerous scattered homes.	Regular, yearly clearing of grass from around structures, or the establishment of watered lawns can provide a measure of protection.
Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands	271 mi ²	14 %	These woodlands are popular building sites. Wildfire in this stand type is typically confined to slow moving surface fires, however in hot, dry, windy conditions many of these stands can support fast moving crown fires which are very destructive and hazardous to fire personnel.	Fuel treatment as suggested by defensible space guidelines found in the NMSF publication <i>Living with Fire-A guide for the Homeowner</i> (1999) or most current mitigation recommendations
Ponderosa Pine	197 mi ²	10-11%	All the current WUI subdivisions are located within PP stands. The stands consist of dense patches of understory trees and heavy accumulations of understory litter and duff material. In dry, windy conditions wildfire often develops into uncontrollable stand-replacing events. This means that a dangerous fire situation may exist during much of the year. Without fuels management the risk of severe fires can threaten homes during seasons when fires are generally uncommon.	Fuel treatment as suggested by defensible space guidelines found in the NMSF publication <i>Living with Fire-A guide for the Homeowner</i> (1999) or most current mitigation recommendations
Mixed Conifer	206 mi ²	11%	Fire in this vegetation type vary from light surface fires to stand-replacing conflagurations. Within Mora County, development in this stand type is often surrounded by dense vegetation both in the overstory and the understory. During severe drought these stands fire hazard is increased.	As with PP, fuels management in this forest type is very effective, but slightly more difficult because of the greater fuel quantities generally present.

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FIRE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

As stated 85 percent of Mora County is classified as privately owned. The remaining lands being State, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service or Forest Service. Such a large percentage of privately owned land creates a great need for public education and outreach. Historically the responsibility has fallen upon the local volunteer fire fighters.

The Mora County Wildland-Urban Interface Plan, prepared by SEC Inc. in 2002, recommended the County hire a Wildland Coordinator to meet several fire related needs, one being the the need for effective fire education and outreach. In 2003, Volunteer Fire Assistance monies were granted for up to three years for the hire of the Mora County Wildland Coordinator to work directly for the Mora County Fire Chief's Association. The Wildland Coordinator largely took over the responsibility of Public Education and Outreach. The VFA monies were only intended as "seed" monies, after three years other funding sources were intended to fund the position.

Several "gaps" are created when all fire responsibility falls on the shoulders of volunteer firefighters. The hire of a Wildland Coordinator helped to fill in several of these gaps and expanded the influence and effectiveness of the Mora County Fire Chief's Association. The Fire Chief's Association has made securing funding for the continued hire of a Wildland Coordinator a priority for future fire education, prevention and outreach programs as well as other needs as determined by the Fire Chief's Association.

The Fire Chief's Association has also come up with a new and innovative idea for Community Outreach and Education. It is believed by the Association that the use a Fire Education Video created using local footage of past fires with local residents and fire personnel featured would go a long way to educate the public about the benefits of Hazardous Fuels Reduction Programs. The focus would be on before, during and after fuels reduction treatment on "neighbors" property to show not only the process up close and personal, but the benefits as well. The video could be used at Community Fairs, home/property owner's Association Meetings, High Schools, Senior Centers, and/or mailed to property owners within a target area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The collaborative preparation of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan induced the parties involved to assess the status of the county with regard to the risks of wildfire. The objectives were to assess the wildfire hazards and community values at risk, identify the systems and resources to mitigate those hazards, adequately inform and involve the general public and to provide for appropriate compliance.

Assessment of wildfire risk was based largely on the Wildland-Urban Interface Plan completed by SEC inc., in 2002, which includes a ten-year Mitigation Plan and from historic weather patterns and fire behavior⁵ in and around the County. Much work has been done since the WUI Plan was received by Mora County. Western Mora Water and Soil Conservation District received a grant to help private home owners with defensible space. Approximately 75 homeowners took advantage of this funding opportunity and have complied with the defensible space guidelines.⁶ Still much remains to be done to effectively address the wildfire risk to life and property. It has been shown that defensible space is far more effective when all the homeowners in a subdivision are complying. Often one homeowner's diligence is made obsolete by their neighbor's disregard.

More work needs to be done in regard to fuelbreaks to protect not only homes, but also watersheds, property, infrastructure and recreational areas.

The local fire departments have diligently sought to improve their department's preparedness levels, but the need is great and never ending. With a limited operating budget other funding sources are in high demand to effectively and safely provide fire protection to the citizens of Mora County.

Even the most diligent and dedicated volunteer firefighter can only be expected to accomplish so much. While each of the fire chief's, has done their very best to ensure that all the needs within their district are met, each has benefited greatly from the creation of the Wildland Coordinator position. The continued funding of this position is considered a priority as the dividends have been well worth the investment.

5. Appendix 5: Historical Wildland Fire Statistics from 1/1/1990 through 5/9/2005

6. Appendix 6: Mora County Forest Health Treatment Map

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County Commissioners

ROSALIE REGENSBERG
CHAIR

PETER MARTINEZ
VICE-CHAIR

MICHAEL LOVATO
MEMBER

P.O. BOX 580
MORA, NEW MEXICO 87732
(505) 387-5279
FAX (505) 387-9022

State of New Mexico
County of Mora

Resolution 05-26

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE "COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN",
A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY THE MORA COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S
ASSOCIATION AND PARTNERS, IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE HEALTHY FOREST RESTORATION ACT OF 2003 FOR THE PURPOSE
OF FUNDING, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY PROTECTION
AND WILDFIRE HAZARD MITIGATION ACTIVITIES.

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available
through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation
activities on federal and non federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities; and

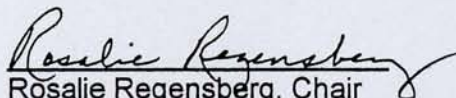
WHEREAS, a mandatory qualification defined in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act
of 2003 to access funding programs is to develop a plan called a "Community
Wildfire Protection Plan" (CWPP) through local *collaboration* that *prioritizes fuels
reduction* and addresses *treatment of structural ignitability*; and

WHEREAS, the County of Mora has established the Mora County Fire Chief's
Association in August of 1999 to address the fire prevention, protection, training,
suppression, education and public outreach needs of Mora County as well as
collaboratively working with other agencies, entities, and citizens within Mora County;
and

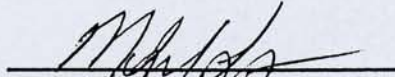
WHEREAS, this collaboratively developed CWPP meets the requirements and is
supported by New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department,
State Forestry Division/State Parks, The United States Forest Service, and each of
the 10 Fire Chiefs:

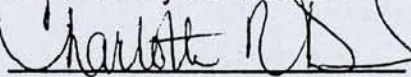
NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Governing Body of the County of Mora
that the attached "Community Wildfire Protection Plan" be hereby adopted.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 31st day of May 2005.


Rosalie Regensberg, Chair
Mora County Commission

Peter Martinez, Vice-Chair
Mora County Commission


Michael Lovato, Member
Mora County Commission


Attest: Charlotte Duran, Clerk

MORA COUNTY COMMISSION

Rosalie Regensberg
Ms. Rosalie Regensberg, Chair
Mora County Commission Date

Mr. Peter Martinez, Vice-Chair
Mora County Commission Date

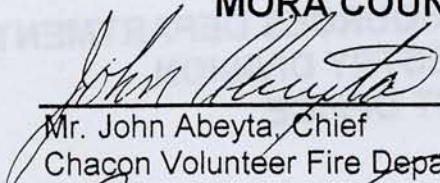
Michael Lovato
Mr. Michael Lovato, member
Mora County Commission Date 5/3/05

Ms. Emma Buck-Duran, Manger
Mora County Date

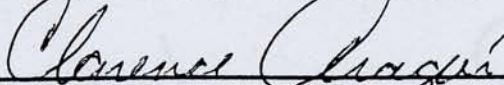
Ken Coffey
Mr. Ken Coffey, Emergency Management Officer
Mora County Date 6-2-05

Charlotte Duran
Attest: Ms. Charlotte Duran, Clerk
Mora County Date

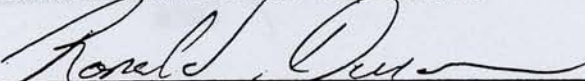
MORA COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION


Mr. John Abeyta, Chief
Chacon Volunteer Fire Department

6/2/05
Date


Mr. Clarence Aragon, Chief
L.M.C. Volunteer Fire Department

5/12/05
Date


Mr. Ronald Duran, Chief
Buena Vista Volunteer Fire Department

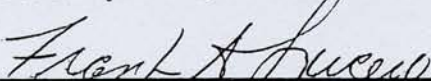
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Mr. Amos Espinoza, Chief
Guadalupita Volunteer Fire Department

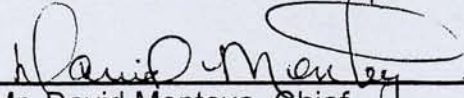
Date

Mr. Don Hamilton, Chief
Ocate/Ojo Feliz Volunteer Fire Department

Date


Mr. Frank Lucero, Chief
Watrous Volunteer Fire Department


5/12/05
Date


Mr. David Montoya, Chief
Rainsville Volunteer Fire Department

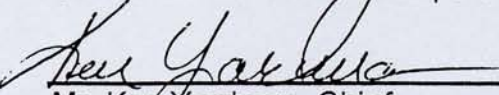
5/12/05
Date

Mr. Dennis Romero, Chief
Mora Volunteer Fire Department

Date


Mr. Jack Vigil, Chief
C.H.E.T. Volunteer Fire Department

5/20/05
Date


Mr. Ken Yardman, Chief
Golondrinas Volunteer Fire Department

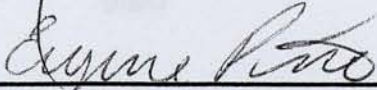
5/12/05
Date

**ENERGY, MINERALS & NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
NEW MEXICO STATE FORESTRY DIVISION
LAS VEGAS DISTRICT OFFICE**



Mr. Louie Casaus, District Forester
New Mexico State Forestry

7/28/05
Date



Mr. Eugene Pino, Fire Management Officer
New Mexico State Forestry

7/28/05
Date

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST

Cecilia Seesholtz
Mrs. Cecilia Seesholtz, District Ranger
Camino Real Ranger District

June 22, 2005
Date

**UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE
SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST**

Joseph G. Reddan

Joseph G. Reddan, District Ranger
Pecos/Las Vegas Ranger District

15 June 2005

Date

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STATE OF NEW MEXICO

ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT

WITH MORA COUNTY

FOR WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION

THIS AGREEMENT IS ENTERED into by and between the NEW MEXICO ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, STATE FORESTRY DIVISION (EMNRD), and the COUNTY OF MORA, STATE OF NEW MEXICO, through the BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS of said COUNTY (County), pursuant to the Joint Powers Agreement Act, Sections 11-1-1 through 11-1-7 NMSA 1978; the Forest Conservation Act, Sections 68-2-1 through 68-2-20 NMSA 1978; and the Federal Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-313.

WHEREAS, the control of timber, grass, woodland and other wildfires on non-municipal lands is the responsibility of both the County and EMNRD;

WHEREAS, EMNRD desires to assist the County and the County desires to assist EMNRD to enhance the organization of wildfire protection on non-municipal lands within the County;

WHEREAS, EMNRD and County can more effectively administer their wildfire protection responsibilities if additional firefighting equipment is available to County;

WHEREAS, EMNRD may, from time to time, have a limited number of Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) firefighting vehicles

and equipment available to loan to the County and its local fire departments for fire control work; and

WHEREAS, EMNRD may also have funding available to pay for fire suppression work performed on non-municipal lands within the County;

NOW, THEREFORE, County and EMNRD agree to maintain, in accordance with the plans and standards subsequently agreed upon, a cooperative fire protection system covering any or all private, County, non-municipal, and State lands within the County of Mora under the conditions hereinafter provided, to wit:

1. COUNTY AGREES TO DO OR CAUSE TO BE DONE THE FOLLOWING:
 - a. Develop and maintain a cooperative wildfire protection system including the use of local fire departments for the prevention, detection, pre-suppression and suppression of wildfire, and for the procurement and maintenance of forest, brush and grassland firefighting equipment.
 - b. Assist EMNRD in annually reviewing, on or before January 15, of each year a wildfire prevention and protection analysis for non-municipal, private and State lands within the County which will identify the amounts and locations of firefighting equipment actually available or needed for fire suppression.
 - c. Provide to EMNRD, individual fire reports and claims for reimbursement when permitted under paragraph 2.g, below, following each wildfire in said County which indicate the

nature of the fire, the extent of damage done by the fire, personnel used, equipment used and other reasonable information that EMNRD may request and information regarding the annual fire expenditures.

- d. Assist EMNRD in the preparation of financial reports for each of the County's local fire departments and an annual audit of applicable financial records.
- e. Provide to EMNRD within thirty (30) days following its preparation a copy of the County's annual audit as it pertains to expenses under this Agreement.
- f. Maintain the equipment provided by EMNRD in good condition, reasonable wear and tear excepted, and make the equipment available to EMNRD for inspection upon reasonable request.
- g. Use equipment provided by EMNRD exclusively for fire purposes only. Failure to comply with guidelines of the FEPP may result in the removal of equipment from the County or the local fire department.
- h. Obtain approval from EMNRD in writing prior to adding accessories or altering any of the property provided pursuant to this Agreement. FEPP equipment shall not be sold, junked or traded, but must be returned to EMNRD for disposition. Title to all accessories, tools, sirens, or other property which is added by the County or local fire department to equipment furnished by EMNRD shall remain with the County or local fire department. Such property

may be removed prior to the return of equipment to EMNRD, provided that removal does not materially damage the equipment.

i. Transport the equipment provided by EMNRD to and from locations designated by EMNRD in writing and paint and add such decals or insignias as prescribed by EMNRD.

j. Obtain insurance coverage for the equipment provided by EMNRD in accordance with minimum requirements of the Risk Management Division, General Services Department. EMNRD shall be named as co-insured. Proof of the required insurance coverage for the equipment shall be sent to EMNRD within thirty days after the equipment is accepted by the County or local fire department and by January 15 of each year thereafter annually.

k. Require operators of the equipment to obtain and carry the appropriate Class of New Mexico issued driver's licenses which are necessary to legally operate the equipment provided by EMNRD, maintain a current list of personnel who are licensed and authorized to operate the equipment under the terms of this Agreement, and provide that list to EMNRD at the same time as required for reporting insurance coverage as set forth in paragraph "1.j, above."

l. Provide insurance coverage for all injury or damage to persons or property, including third parties, that occurs as a result of actions of the County, each local fire