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Kim Carpenter
County Executive Officer

Mike Stark
County Operations Officer

Susan Hakanson
Public Relations Manager

100 South Oliver Drive
Aztec, New Mexico 87410-2432
Phone: (505) 334-9481
www.sjcounty.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information,
please contact:

Susan Hakanson

San Juan County Public Relations

shakanson@sjcounty.net, 505 386-8325

Arena Canyon Fire Burning in North Eastern San Juan County

San Juan County, NM – At approximately 3:50 p.m. this afternoon, May 25, 2018, the San Juan County Fire Department responded with mutual aid to a fire west of Navajo Lake near Highway 511. The Los Pinos Fire District out of Ignacio Colorado initially responded. The fire, believed to be caused by a lightning strike, was near the state line on private and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land.

The fire, being called the “Arena Canyon Fire” was estimated to be approximately 180 acres at 8:00 p.m. this evening.

Approximately 15 people have been evacuated. No structures are being reported lost at this time. Highway 511 is closed in the area and will remain closed through the night.

Thanks to many responding districts the fire is listed as “surrounded” at this time, with crews working hot spots.

Multiple resources from the region are cooperating to fight this fire on the ground and from the air, including:

- Los Pinos Fire District from Ignacio, Colorado
- San Juan County New Mexico Fire Districts
 - District Five (5), Blanco
 - District Three (3), Cedar Hill
 - District Seven (7), Center Point
 - District Two (2), Flora Vista
- Farmington Fire District
- BLM and U.S. Forest Service Carson District

San Juan County and the entire region is experiencing a significant drought. Ground cover and trees are abnormally dry for this early in the season. While this fire is believed to have been caused by lightning, San Juan County is asking you to be extremely cautious. Fires will be quick to start and to spread. Area agencies including both San Juan County New Mexico and La Plata County Colorado, area BLM offices and State Forestry as well as the City of Farmington have put burn bans in place.

The San Juan County Fire Ban includes:

1. Open burning, including burning of crop land, fields, range land, debris burning, slash piles, prescribed burning, or weed burning.
2. Campfires, except where cooking or heating devices use kerosene with gas or propane as a fuel in an improved camping area that is clear of flammable vegetation for at least 30 feet or within a residential yard. Within a residential yard, charcoal may be utilized in a cooking device. However, charcoal may not be disposed of in any fashion until the charcoal is cool enough to handle with bare hands.
3. Smoking is prohibited except in enclosed buildings, within vehicles equipped with ash trays, or on paved or surface roads or within a private yard; provided, however, that cigarette butts and cigar butts must be extinguished in ash trays.
4. The use of fireworks is prohibited in any area covered wholly or in part with timber, bush, grass, or other flammable vegetation. Fireworks may be utilized only in accordance with the San Juan County Fireworks Proclamation dated May 1, 2018, which is extended until further notice.
5. All devices using internal combustion engines must have a proper spark arrester installed. "Hot" vehicles must not be parked off pavement in areas with combustible vegetation.
6. Cutting or grinding metal or using a welder, either arc or gas, or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame, except in areas cleared of flammable materials at least 10 feet in diameter and equipped with a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher of not less than 10 pounds capacity.
7. Discharging, using, or possessing any combustible or explosive composition.
8. Operating a chain saw without a USDA or SAE approved spark arrester properly installed and working and having a chemical fire extinguisher on site of not less than 10 pounds capacity by weight.
9. The burning of rubbish, which has been illegal in the State of New Mexico since 2003 per State statute.

Stay tuned to San Juan County Government and San Juan County Office of Emergency Management's Facebook pages for updates.

Please direct any San Juan County press and related inquiries to Susan Hakanson, San Juan County Public Relations Manager, at shakanson@sjcounty.net or 505-386-8325.