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Service Change Notice 22-63
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
250 PM EDT Thu Jun 23 2022

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From: Greg Schoor, Acting Chief
 Severe, Fire, Public, and Winter Weather Services Branch

Subject: Changes to Fire Weather Zones for NWS Weather Forecast Office
 Albuquerque, New Mexico: Effective September 7, 2022

Effective, September 7, 2022, at 3:00 PM Mountain Daylight Time (MDT), 2000 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), the NWS Weather Forecast Office in Albuquerque, NM (ABQ) will complete changes to the Fire Weather Forecast Zones encompassing Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Taos, Colfax, Union, Mora, San Miguel, Guadalupe, Torrance, Bernalillo, Valencia, Socorro, Lincoln, Catron and Cibola counties in northern New Mexico. After this change, all fire weather forecasts and related products will use the new zone numbers and names shown below.

If September 7, 2022 is declared a Critical Weather Day, this implementation will be postponed to September 8, 2022 at 2000 UTC.

These changes are intended to provide increased flexibility and improved accuracy of forecast, watch, warning, and advisory products in the fire weather program. The new zones are being divided primarily to more closely align with natural topography, terrain and vegetation supported by local fire partners and national forests. This will in turn lead to more optimal issuance of fire weather products since the zones will have similar characteristics.

Fire Weather zone NMZ101 will remain unchanged as the Northwest Plateau zone. Zone NMZ102, NMZ103 and NMZ104 are organized into five different zones. The new zone NMZ120 is called the North Central Mountains zone, new zone NMZ121 is called the Upper Rio Grande Valley and Lower Chama River Valley zone, new zone NMZ122 is called the Sangre de Cristo Mountain zone, zone NMZ123 is the Northeast Highlands, and zone NMZ104 is called the Northeast Plains as before. Areas from previous zones NMZ102 and NMZ103 were split up to form zones NMZ121 and NMZ122. Zone NMZ123 takes a very small area from zone NMZ104, but is otherwise unchanged.

Previous zone NMZ105 remains the same with the same area and new name of West-Central Mountains Including the Chuska Mountains. Previous zone NMZ106 remains the same zone with the same area and name of Middle Rio Grande Valley.

Previous zones NMZ107 and NMZ108 are reorganized into three zones with the eastern portion of NMZ107 and western portion of NMZ108 creating the new zone NMZ125. Zone NMZ107 becomes NMZ124 and changes to the name Sandia, Manzano, and Gallinas Mountains. A new zone being created is NMZ125 called Central Highlands. Previous zone NMZ108 becomes NMZ126 with the same name of East Central Plains but is smaller in area. Previous zone NMZ109 remains the same area with a new name of West-Central Basin and Range.

Table 1: Current Fire weather zones and corresponding Universal Geographic Codes (UGC) for WFO Albuquerque:

UGC: Current Fire Weather Zone Names

NMZ101: Northwest Plateau
NMZ102: North Central Mountains
NMZ103: Northeast Highlands
NMZ104: Northeast Plains
NMZ105: West Central Mountains
NMZ106: Middle Rio Grande Valley
NMZ107: Sandia and Manzano Mountains
NMZ108: East Central Plains
NMZ109: West Central Highlands

Table 2: Fire weather zones and corresponding UGC for which WFO Albuquerque will issue forecasts and warnings effective September 7, 2022:

UGC: New Fire Weather Zone Names

NMZ101: Northwest Plateau
NMZ104: Northeast Plains
NMZ105: West Central Mountains
NMZ106: Middle Rio Grande Valley
NMZ109: West-Central Basin and Range
NMZ120: North Central Mountains
NMZ121: Upper Rio Grande Valley and Lower Rio Chama Valley
NMZ122: Sangre de Cristo Mountains
NMZ123: Northeast Highlands
NMZ124: Sandia, Manzano and Gallinas Mountains
NMZ125: Central Highlands
NMZ126: East Central Plains

Table 3: Primary cities included in the new fire weather zones effective September 7, 2022:

UGC: Primary cities within New Zones

NMZ120: Chama
NMZ121: Santa Fe, Espanola, Taos
NMZ122: Taos Ski Valley, Red River, Angel Fire
NMZ123: Raton, Springer, Las Vegas
NMZ124: Estancia
NMZ125: Vaughn, Clines Corners, Santa Rosa
NMZ126: Tucumcari, Clovis

Table 4: NWS products affected by the WFO Albuquerque, NM, fire weather zone changes effective September 7, 2022:

PRODUCT NAME	AWIPS ID	WMO HEADING
FIRE WEATHER FORECAST	FWFABQ	FNUS55 KABQ
FIRE WEATHER MESSAGE	RFWABQ	WWUS85 KABQ
FIRE WEATHER POINT FORECAST	PFWABQ	FOUS54 KABQ

Users of WFO Albuquerque products must take the appropriate action to ensure systems recognize the new UGC (Z) and new zone alignments and names.

Updated fire weather zone shapefiles are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/gis/FireZones>

A graphical depiction of these changes are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/media/abq/Briefings/FireWXZoneChangeABQ.pdf> and
through and ArcGIS StoryMap:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9d3cdf9e939a44249879c7a8875c1a98f>

If you have any questions, please contact:

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National Service Change Notices are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

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