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Dozens of dogs found at ex-vet's home

Sheriff's office finds 40 animals after neighbors complain about conditions

By Nico Roesler
The New Mexican

The Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office on Monday searched a south Santa Fe County house where a former veterinarian lives to find more than 40 dogs, some of which appeared neglected and sick.

Lt. William Pacheco said Monday that Santa Fe County animal control officers began receiving complaints from residents on Dusty Trail in Edgewood of dozens of dogs that never stopped barking. One of the residents, Rod Simpson, said that there was an "ungodly" number of dogs on the property living inside the

house and in a fenced kennel in the yard.

"I couldn't even hear myself talk sometimes on my own front porch," Simpson said by phone Monday.

Simpson said he called animal control in February after witnessing one of the

*Please see **DOGS**, Page A-4*



Yelp's star power

The popular website gives customers a voice with its public ratings system — a boon for some local businesses and a hindrance for others. **LOCAL BUSINESS, C-1**

Fire protection pays

LESSONS FROM THE WALDO CANYON FIRE

- ◆ Hot embers can ignite homes hundreds of yards from the main blaze.
- ◆ Close proximity between houses and sloped, vegetated property between them contributed to many homes burning. Homes closer than 15 feet apart are most vulnerable when one property has a high fire risk.
- ◆ Informed and active communities are key to preventing wildfires from destroying neighborhoods.
- ◆ Homes with defensible space around them survived more often than those that didn't.



The Waldo Canyon Fire burned 18,000 acres and more than 350 homes in Colorado last summer. A new assessment shows many more houses and properties would have been destroyed if the communities had not worked to reduce wildfire risks. PHOTOS COURTESY KARI GREER/U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Report finds mitigation efforts saved residents and agencies \$77 million in Colorado blaze

By Staci Matlock
The New Mexican

How valuable are Santa Fe's efforts to reduce fire risks on private and public property?

Similar mitigation efforts by its neighbors to the north in Colorado Springs, Colo., helped save thousands of homes and millions of dollars last year during the Waldo Canyon wildfire, according to a new report.

The report found \$300,000 spent to reduce fire risks in one subdivision alone helped the

neighborhood avoid an estimated \$77 million in losses due to the fire.

The report, "Lessons Learned from Waldo Canyon," analyzed the fire's aftermath and is the first of its kind produced in a collaborative effort between the U.S. Forest Service, fire chiefs, the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety, the National Fire Protection Association and The Nature Conservancy.

The Waldo Canyon Fire started

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A properly built structure and defensible space helped one house survive the Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado Springs, Colo.

New program taps veterans for wildfire front lines

By Steve Terrell
The New Mexican

New Mexico plans to hire 40 military veterans to serve as firefighters during the upcoming wildfire season as part of a pilot program announced Monday by Gov. Susana Martinez's administration.

Veterans will be trained and assigned to four "hand crews" to fight wildfires across the state. State Forestry spokesman Dan Ware said the military veterans will be in addition to about 250 seasonal firefighters the

state typically hires.

"We are not cutting any jobs to make way for these," Ware said. Starting pay is \$1740 an hour, and some firefighting training starts next week.

New Mexico is bracing for a possibly devastating fire season because of lingering drought conditions. The state's wildfire season usually runs from May to July, though the crews of military veterans could be assigned to help fight fires outside New Mexico after the wildfire season ends in the state.

Ware said the state will evaluate the

pilot program for military veterans after the fire season to determine whether it should be made permanent and expanded.

State prison inmates have been trained to help the State Forestry Division in fighting wildfires since 1996.

The governor announced the program for military veterans at a news conference in Albuquerque, where she urged New Mexicans and visitors to the state to be vigilant about the threat of wildfires.

"Conditions are in place for another potentially difficult fire season, and

I urge all New Mexicans to take the responsibility we all have to prevent wildfires very seriously," Martinez said in a statement.

The Little Bear Fire near Ruidoso last year became the most destructive in the state's recorded history. It destroyed more than 250 buildings and caused more than \$22 million in damages.

There have been 59 wildfires on state and privately owned land since January, burning about 739 acres. That's down from 68 fires that burned 2,104 acres at the same time last year.

Health plan rate hike to hit state workers

Impending 15 percent change in premiums first increase in five years

By Steve Terrell
The New Mexican

State employees might get a 1 percent pay raise this year, depending on what Gov. Susana decides to do about the budget bill by the end of the week. However, even if that modest raise comes through, part of it will be eaten up by a 15 percent hike in health insurance premiums for state workers, scheduled to go into effect in July.

According to a recent employee benefits newsletter published by the state General Services Department, health plan premiums have not increased for five years, even though the cost of insurance has risen each year. "To maintain the state's health fund, medical premiums are going up 15 percent beginning in July ..." the newsletter said.

On top of that, deductibles under the plan will go up more than

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Today

Mostly cloudy.
High 63,
low 33.

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Obituaries

Alina Bourger, 21, Las Cruces, March 27

Jocelyn Elder, 56, Santa Fe, Feb. 16

Ruby A. Griego, March 30

Fred Sandoval

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Pasapick

Jeff Mangum

Acoustic guitar and vocals, 7:30 p.m., Lencis Performing Arts Center, \$20-\$32, a portion of the ticket sales benefits the nonprofit Blue Skies for Children, 988-1234, ticketssantafe.org.

More events in Calendar, A-2 and Fridays in Pasatiempo

