

# *Traditions and Climate Change - Cuentos from Chimayó*

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Healthy Climate New Mexico

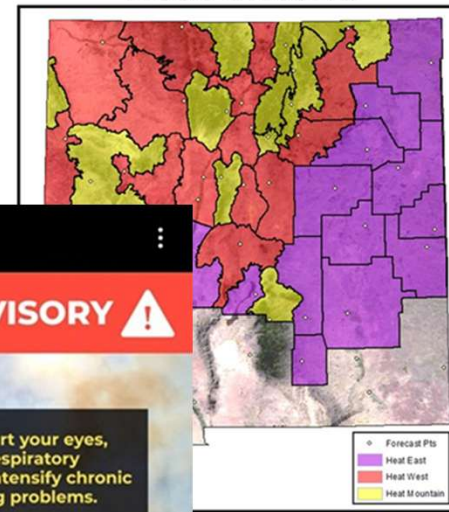
NM Science, Technology and Telecommunications Committee  
June 24, 2026



# Climate and Health in New Mexico



## Heat Criteria



### Eastern/Southern Valley Zones

**Excessive Heat Warning**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 110$ F

**Heat Advisory**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 105$ F

### Central/Western Zones

**Excessive Heat Warning**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 105$ F

**Heat Advisory**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 100$ F

### Mountain Zones

**Excessive Heat Warning**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 100$ F

**Heat Advisory**  
Max Temperatures/Heat Index  $\geq 95$ F

**SMOKE ADVISORY**

Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system, and intensify chronic heart and lung problems.

Residents with respiratory or heart disease, asthma, adults 65 and older, young children, and pregnant women should take extra precaution.

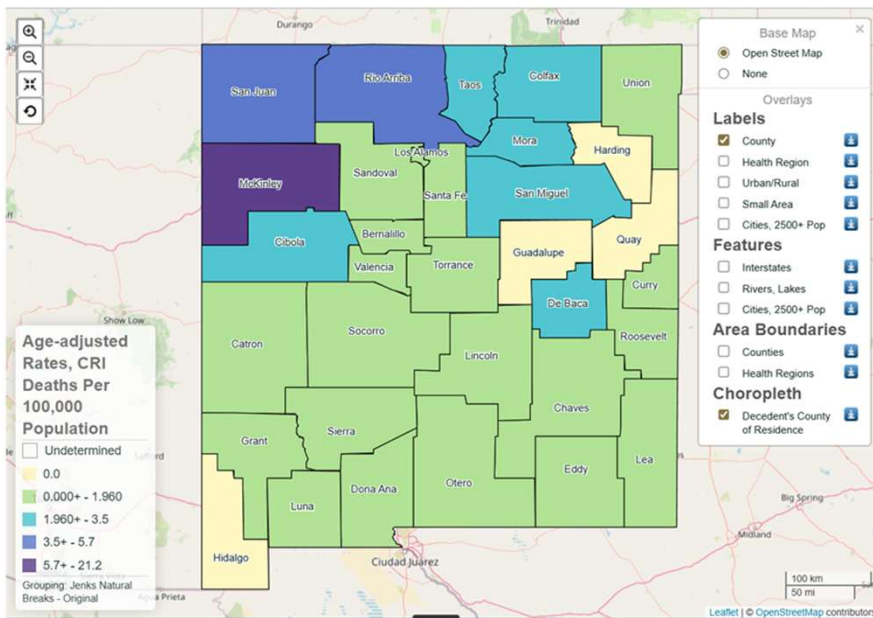
For more info please visit: [nctracking.org/environment/air/FireAndSmoke.html](http://nctracking.org/environment/air/FireAndSmoke.html)

19 likes  
nmdoh Residents of San Miguel, Mora, and Colfax Counties (NW of I-25): NMDOH... more  
3 hours ago • See Translation

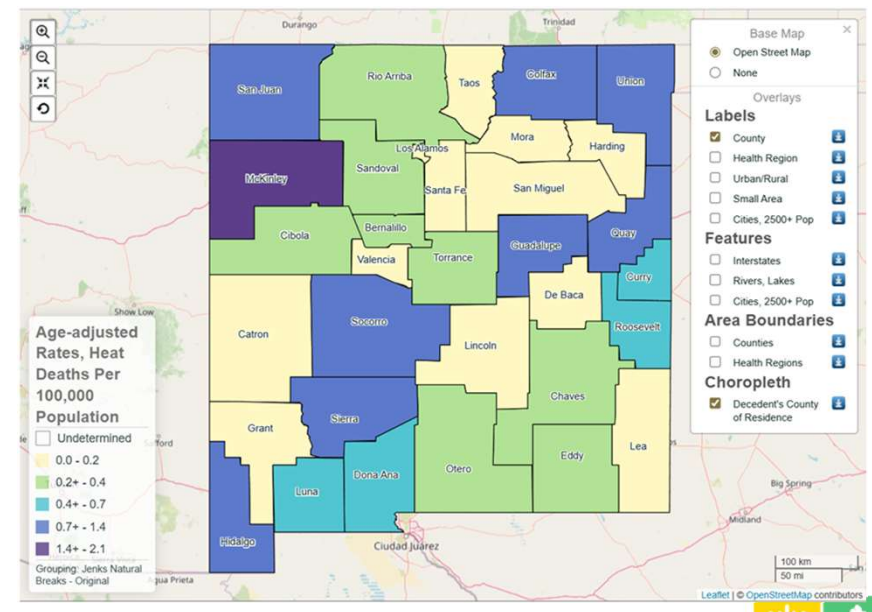


# Age-adjusted death rates\*, 2013-2023, NM

## Cold-related



## Heat-related



\*<https://nmtracking.doh.nm.gov/> accessed 9/2/2025



# How Hot?!?

In the Northeast region of New Mexico

- March 2025: High was 67°
- March 2026: High was **82° - a record**

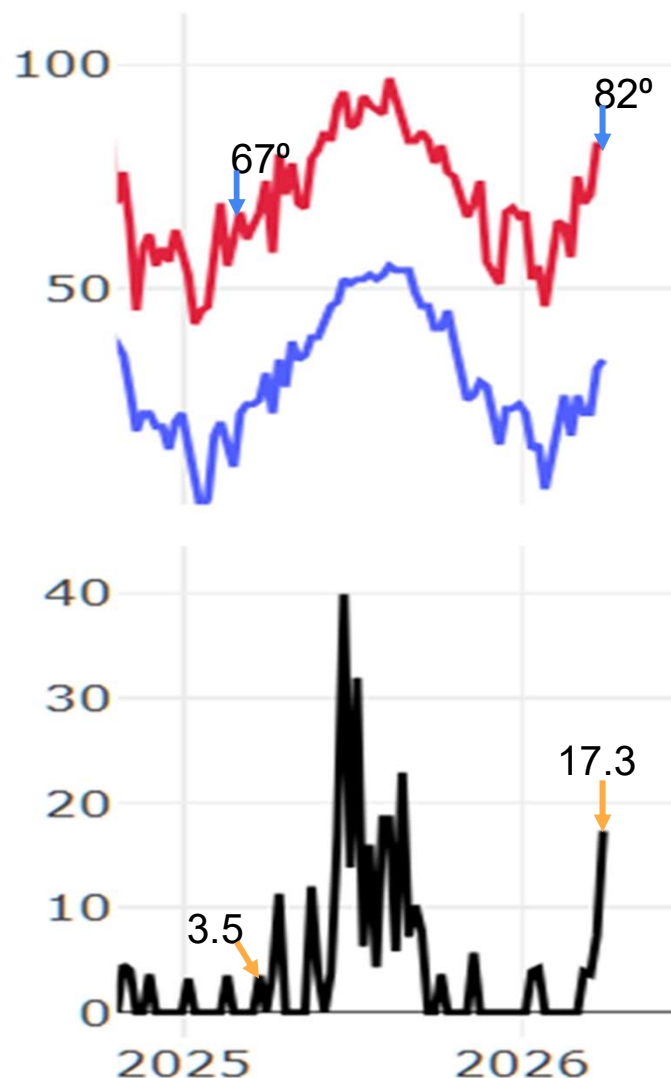
Emergency Department visit incidence rates - Northeast region:

- March 2025: 3.5 HRI per 10,000 visits
- March 2026: **17.3 HRI per 10,000 visits**  
**5 times higher!**

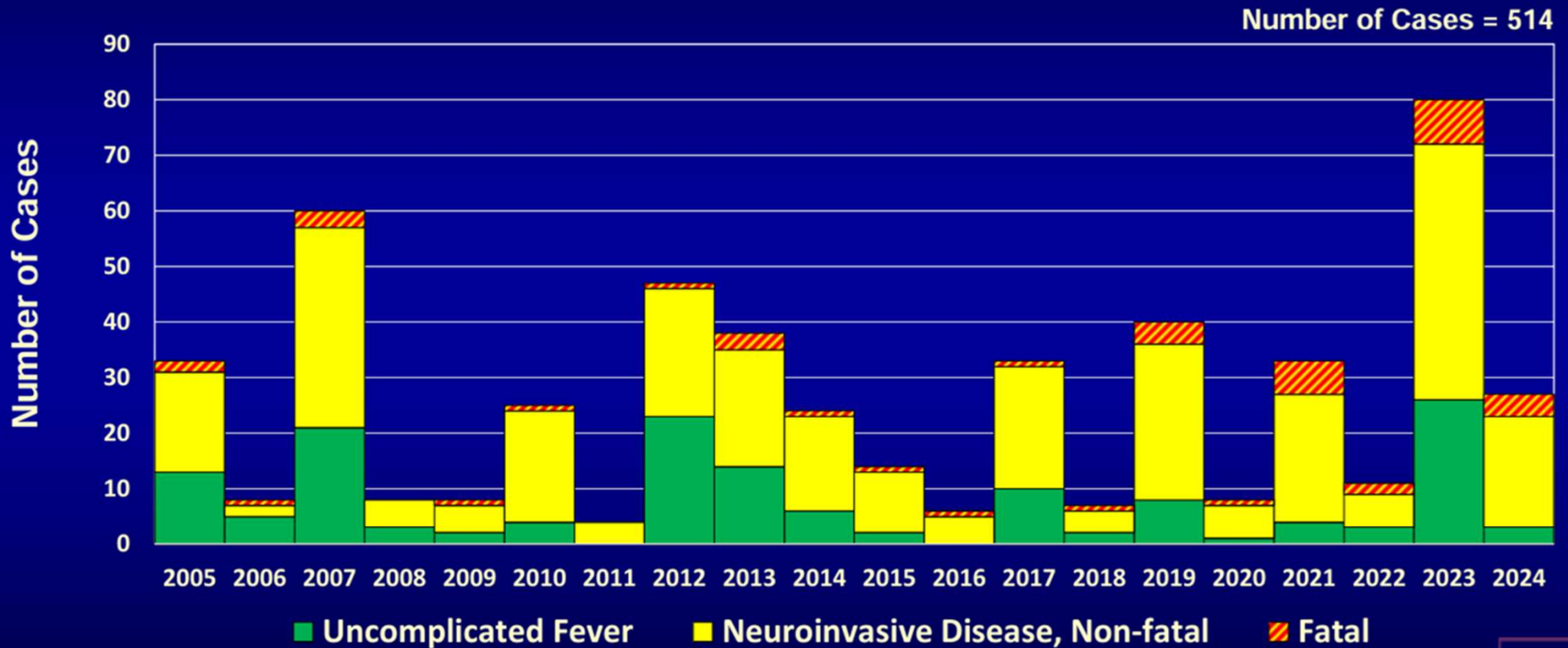
Northeast region counties:

Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Miguel, Santa Fe, Taos, Union

Source: New Mexico Environmental Public Health Tracking ESSENCE HRI tracker



# Human West Nile Virus Cases in New Mexico by Year & Clinical Syndrome 2005 - 2024



# Flood in Chimayó NM, August 29, 2025



Nearby residents eye at-risk dam, rainstorms with worry, wariness

★ Follow Scott Wyland

By Scott Wyland [swyland@sfnwmexican.com](mailto:swyland@sfnwmexican.com)

Feb 26, 2024



*Meet  
Wilfred  
Romero*



# John Trujillo, apple farmer

Apples are burned from hotter sun temperatures

Temperature extremes, such as late frost make crop yields unpredictable

More invasive species growing along the acequia

Elk!

Water flows are diminished from previous years

How methods have changed:

- Multiple water sources, well, direct irrigation, tanks

- Reflectors under trees to prevent frost kill

- Cold storage for harvest



*Mr. W.A., the  
mayordomo's  
son*



“I imagine that it will take 10 years to get the acequia back to normal. The orchards will survive but it is the folks with gardens that will suffer without the acequia running.”



# *La Cañada Ancha acequia today*



# *New Mexico farm facts*

- Total # of farms: 20,900 (2023), down from 25,044 (2017) a 17% decrease
- Average age of farmers in NM is 60 years! 10% of farmers earn less than \$10,000 annually
  - Number of farm operators/producers in 2017- 40,850, over 62% had an off-farm job
- Family-owned and -operated farms accounted for 95% of all New Mexico farms, with 82% of agricultural operations being less than 1,000 acres in size
- In Rio Arriba county there were 1,285 farms (2022), less of 11% from 2017
  - 21,304 farm acres are irrigated, 60,052 acres are crop land.
  - #3 in the state for nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod
  - #4 for poultry and eggs

Sources: *State Agriculture Overview* (2023), *USDA/NASS State Agricultural Overview* (2022) and *Census of Agriculture, 2017*, on <https://www.nmhealthysoil.org/land-access/> accessed Sept. 2025



# *Can acequia traditions survive?*

## **Challenges**

- Diminishing snowmelt/drought
- Unpredictability of weather
- Extreme temperatures
- Lack of interest
- Aging population
- Aging infrastructure

## **Potential solutions**

- Improve infrastructure
- Alternative energy sources
- Cut reliance on fossil fuels
- Use permaculture methods
- Change crop types
- Get youth interested
- Remember, water is life!



# *Please consider supporting*

- Climate adaptation health program
- Extreme weather resilience planning

