

The 90 dry hydrants the RC&D has installed tap into natural water sources; however, virtually all of the available natural water sources have been utilized. As a result the RC&D has turned to installing 10,000 gallon underground tanks. Two such emergency tanks have been installed, one at Canon Plaza and one at the Latir Fire Department, and another 50 are needed to provide northern New Mexico basic fire protection.



Protecting Canon Plaza



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***What do you do if you are a rural fire department in northern New Mexico and your tanker truck runs out of water while you are fighting a fire?***

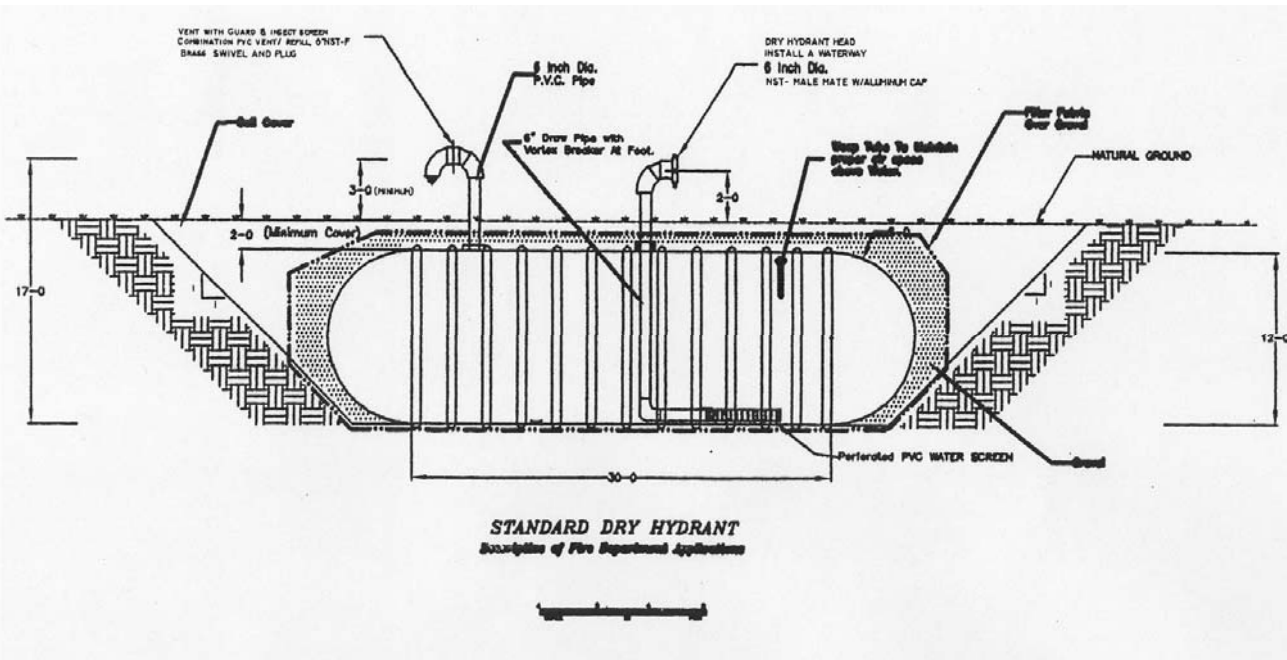
***If you are like 25 such departments you run to refill at one of 90 nearby dry hydrants that have been installed through the efforts of the Northern Rio Grande Rural Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council and New Mexico State Legislature***

A dry hydrant is a non-pressured pipe sunk into a water source that a fire tanker with a pump on it can use to quickly refill the tanker during a fire in a rural area. For rural fire departments, the nearby location of such hydrants is critical because time lost in traveling to a water source can greatly impact the volunteers' ability to fight the fire.

Dry hydrants are used in northern New Mexico not only for domestic fires, but wildfires. New Mexico's drought in recent years has taught us a lesson in forest health and the value of thinning overgrowth areas. But, part of the lesson must also be preparedness for precision fire fighting when fires do occur.



A significant number of the sites where dry hydrants are still needed do not have a natural water source that can be used to fight fires. Most of those that do have a natural source have been developed by the Northern Rio Grande RC&D. Therefore, the RC&D is turning to installing large, economical underground tanks to provide the critical water supply. These tanks are fiberglass, hold 10,000 gallons, and are buried underground to provide stability and prevent vandalism.



While the underground dry hydrant tanks require an investment that is beyond the means of volunteer fire departments, they are an economical solution to a significant rural hazard - and the New Mexico State Legislature has been a valuable partner in developing dry hydrants and underground tanks. Other valued partners who have helped in these projects include the U.S. Forest Service, State Forestry, Bureau of Land Management, State Fire Marshals, and local fire departments.

It is essential this work continue as rapidly as possible to ensure the critical safety of many small communities in northern New Mexico.

For more information about what you can do to facilitate the installation of dry hydrants - and the work of the Northern Rio Grande RC&D - call (505)753-3508.

