



Filming: Frequently Asked Questions



Feature films, car commercials, fashion catalogs, motion and still photography all happen at White Sands National Monument. The bright white sand dunes are a perfect background for commercial filming and photography. This “frequently asked questions” sheet will provide the basic information for commercial filming and photography at White Sands National Monument.

Application Information

Filming and photography at White Sands National Monument requires a permit when the size of a film or photography crew, the amount of equipment, or the activity of the crew has the potential to damage the natural resources or impact the visitor experience.

Whether the final product produced by the film/photo group is commercial or non-commercial, student, freelance, or non-profit is irrelevant. Impact to the natural resource and/or the visitor experience is the criteria used to identify and manage filming and photography. Crews of three or more people should

complete a film/photography application.

One or two people taking still photography using a hand-held video camera or a video camera with a tripod do not need a permit. Again, the final product use, whether commercial or non-commercial, student, freelance, or non-profit is not a factor in requiring a permit. A permit is required when the activity includes models, props, equipment, or any combination of these items. The number of people involved may also be a factor.

Application Fee

There is a non-refundable fee of \$200 to process and review a request for filming or photography at White Sands National Monument. This fee must be paid at the time of the application. The payment can

be made in the form of cash, cashier's cheques, or money orders for the exact amount. *Personal or company checks will not be accepted.*

Application Process

Please complete the application form located on our website under Special Park Uses/Commercial Filming and Photography (www.nps.gov/whsa).

Answer each question in as much detail as necessary. If the question does not apply to your group, put “N/A” on the line for that question. Make your description of the activity as detailed as possible. If there is not enough room on the application, attach an outline, a concept, a storyboard, or a prospectus for the activity. The application must be signed by the person who will be on-site for the filming activity.

Submit the application via email to WNSA_film_photography@nps.gov or via fax to 575-479-4333. Please put “Film/photography Application” in the subject line of the email.

You may also mail the application to:
White Sands National Monument
P.O. Box 1086
HAFB, NM 88330-1086
ATTN: Film Permit Coordinator
or

Federal Express delivery to:
White Sands National Monument
19955 Highway 70 West
Alamogordo, NM 88310
ATTN: Film Permit Coordinator

Student Film or Photography Projects

Film and photography projects that are a part of an education curriculum or class must fill out an application. However, the application cost for student projects as part of an education curriculum or class will be waived. The only cost to the student will be the monument entrance fee for all persons involved

in the activity. If a student does not fill out an application and does not obtain a valid permit, a citation and any applicable fines will be issued by a law enforcement ranger. The college program coordinator will also be contacted about the failure of the student to follow permit guidelines.

Permit Application Review

1) Applications will be reviewed upon their arrival. A reply with approval/denial of the permit will be sent out within five business days.
2) If an application is denied, a letter detailing the reasons for denial will be mailed within five business days after the receipt of the application.
3) Application fees are non-refundable, even if the permit is denied.
4) Applications that are denied will not be issued a permit and will receive a detailed written explanation for the denial.

5) A permit will be issued once the application has been reviewed and approved.
6) Each permit will have specific conditions, depending on the proposal's complexity and lead time.
7) The activity requested in the application will dictate the conditions placed on the permit to ensure the natural resource and the visitor experience are not impacted.
8) These conditions will vary with each individual permit. Individual permit fees will be assessed after the application is approved.

Permit Fees

Fees for the permit will depend on the complexity of the activity. Each request is reviewed on its own merits. A written estimate of fees will be given to the applicant at the time of approval of the application, which will occur within

five business days after receipt of application.

Fees include but are not limited to: location fees, monitoring fees, and early entry or stay late fees.

Timeline

An approximation of the permit process:
1) Submit application and \$200 fee;
2) Within five business days of receipt of application, the monument will provide a confirmed approval or denial of the application via email. A written explanation for denial and/or a written estimate of fees for the approved application will be provided with the

approval or denial letter.
3) The permit for an approved application will be issued five business days prior to the first day of the shoot.
4) Tech scout(s), selection of dates, and a timeline of events will be based on the individual permit.
5) Close out of final paperwork will occur no later than seven business days after the final day of the shoot.

Local Contacts and Area Services

The Otero County Film Liaison offers production assistance and advising free of charge. If you would like more information on area services please contact the Otero County Film Office.

Otero County Film Office
1301 N White Sands Blvd
Alamogordo, NM 88310-6659
Office: (575) 439-4353
Cell: (575) 495-6093

Distances and Travel Times

Alamogordo is the nearest town to the monument. The distance from Alamogordo on Highway 70 West to the entrance to White Sands National Monument is 13 miles and takes approximately 20 minutes to drive.

drive. In approximately four miles, the paved, blacktop road turns into a plowed, gypsum-sand road. This packed gypsum-sand road is very firm and does not require any special vehicle to continue into the dunes.

Distances and travel times in the monument: When you enter the monument from Highway 70 West, you will be traveling on Dunes Drive. Dunes Drive is eight miles one way and will take you into the heart of the dunes, where the tall, bright white sand dunes are located. The road is a two-lane road with soft shoulders and pull-out areas along the

Travel time from the entrance of the monument to the end of the eight-mile Dunes Drive is approximately 20 minutes. The speed limits in the monument start at 45 mph and drop to 35mph and 25 mph along Dunes Drive. Please obey all posted speed limits.