



Filming: Frequently Asked Questions



From feature films and car commercials to fashion and landscape photography, White Sands National Monument is a popular place for many forms of artistic media as the bright white sand dunes provide a perfect backdrop. If you're interested in shooting your project here, this "frequently asked questions" sheet will provide the basic information you need to obtain a permit.

Does Your Activity Require a Permit?

Most filming and photography activities at White Sands National Monument require a permit. It doesn't matter if the activity is commercial or non-commercial, a student or freelance project, or for non-profit. The final product produced by the film/photo group is irrelevant. It is the impact to the natural resource and/or the visitor experience that is the largest determining factor in regards to whether a permit is required.

For example, 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. However,

a crew of two who are using paid models, props, lighting equipment, or any combination of these items will require a permit. The same is true if a photographer or filmer wants access to parts of the park that the average visitor cannot access on their own. Large crews may also require a permit.

If you are unsure if your project would need a permit, contact the Filming Coordinator at (575) 479-6124 ext. 222 to discuss your project. The coordinator will be able to tell you if a permit is required for your activity.

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 submitted along with the application. Applications

will not be processed if the fee has not been received. Payment must be in 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 Use Permits/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. Unlike professional crews, the application and location fees will be waived for student projects. However, students will still be expected to pay cost recovery as well as provide liability insurance and a bond.

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 Process

Applications must be received at least *one month* in advance and will be reviewed upon their arrival in the order in which they were received. The request will be reviewed and you will be contacted to discuss any questions or concerns about your project.

If approved, a permit will be drafted, along with a detailed estimate of any additional fees. The draft permit is considered tentatively approved until you have signed and returned it to us, indicating that you accept both the fees and conditions outlined in the permit.

Once the request has been reviewed, you will be given either a tentative approval or a denial. Application fees are *non-refundable*, even if the permit is denied. If a request is denied, a permit will not be issued and you will receive a detailed written explanation.

Once you have returned the tentative permit with your signature on it, the Film Coordinator will then take it for final approval by the Superintendent. You will receive the finalized copy of the permit at the time of your safety briefing unless you request otherwise.

Permit Fees

Additional 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 after the request has been tentatively approved.

Fees include but are not limited to location fees, cost recovery, and a performance bond. All permits require that a Certificate of Liability Insurance be provided naming White Sands as co-insured (example will be provided).

Additional Information

Due staff scheduling, it can take up to three weeks for your request to be fully processed. Please submit requests in a timely manner. We will not “rush process” any requests.

Your crew and talent *must* attend a mandatory safety briefing before any filming can take place. This will be scheduled in advance and takes approximately 30 minutes.

The Film Coordinator cannot answer in-depth questions or provide a detailed fee estimate without receiving both the application and application fee first.

If you are in need of a tech scout or any form of production assistance, please contact the Otero County Film Office (see below).

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. White Sands National Monument is located 13 miles outside of Alamogordo on Highway 70 West. The drive takes approximately 20 minutes.

The packed gypsum road is very firm and does not require any special vehicle to continue into the dunes.

After 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 consists of two-lanes with soft shoulders and pull-out areas along the drive. After approximately four miles, the pavement turns into hard-packed gypsum sand.

It takes approximately 20 minutes to travel from the entrance of the monument to the end of the eight-mile Dunes Drive. The speed limit in the monument starts at 45 mph and drops to 35mph and 25 mph as you drive further in. Please obey all posted speed limits.