



Cerro Pelado Fire Update

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Hours: 8 am-8 pm

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The Cerro Pelado Fire, 7 miles east of Jemez Springs, New Mexico, started on Friday, April 22, during an epic wind event. The cause of the fire is under investigation. It is burning in ponderosa pine and mixed conifer trees and brush. The east part of the fire is burning in the fire footprint from the 2011 Las Conchas Fire. The current fire footprint includes forest units that have previously been treated to reduce fire hazard.

A public meeting in Los Alamos is planned for Thursday, time and location to be determined.

Acreage: 5711 **Containment:** 0 percent

Personnel and Equipment: 281 total personnel; 14 engines, 1 Type 1 Hotshot crew, 4 Type 2 crews, 4 Type 2 initial attack crews, 3 helicopters, 1 dozer, 1 rapid medical extraction unit, and 3 water tenders.

Yesterday: Firefighters improved lines on the northern side of the fire to protect Sierra de Los Pinos and Cochiti Mesa communities. On the southwest side of the fire, they strengthened roads that will be firelines by brushing them out with dozers and by hand. They also completed a small strategic firing operation on the southwest corner of the fire. Structure protection assessments continued on the fire. Air tankers dropped retardant on the east side of the fire. Firefighters observed that lines in place are effectively holding the fire under current conditions.

A public meeting about the Cerro Pelado Fire was held yesterday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Jemez Mountain Baptist Church, 6 Riverview Court, Jemez Springs, New Mexico. For those who were unable to attend, a video will be posted on the Cerro Pelado Facebook page.

Today: Firefighters will improve and hold lines on the north side of the fire to provide containment. They will mop up the small strategic firing operation they completed in the southwest corner last night. On the southern end of the fire eastward to the Los Conchas footprint, firefighters will continue with dozer lines and building some hand lines. Helicopters and air tankers will be used to keep fire behavior minimal in the Los Conchas Fire footprint. Firefighters hope to make good progress prior to the incoming critical fire weather on Thursday and Friday.

Weather and Fire Behavior: Thunderstorms and lightening are possible today. These storms may contain strong and gusty winds that are very erratic. If thunderstorms develop, their variable winds could push the fire in any direction traveling up to 10 acres in an hour. The temperature will be in the low to mid 60s with a maximum temperature of 68 degrees. Winds will be south to southwest mostly 12 mph with 25 mph gusts.

Winds are expected to pick up Thursday into Friday. Friday will be a critical weather day with sustained west-northwest winds at 20 mph gusting around 35 mph and minimal relative humidity of 10.

Evacuations, Shelter Areas: The Sandoval County Fire Department and Emergency Management will provide updated information on evacuations, as needed. The Sierra de Los Pinos and Cochiti Mesa communities remain evacuated. Evacuees may seek shelter at the Jemez Mountain Baptist Church, 6 Riverview Court, Jemez Springs, New Mexico, 575-829-4475. Those who evacuated livestock may bring them to the Expo/New Mexico Center at 300 San Pedro Drive NW, Albuquerque or the Sandoval County Sheriff's Posse Arena at 1043 Rodeo Lane, Bernalillo, New Mexico (call Yvette Arnold 505-263-6388).

At this time, due to unsafe conditions, evacuees are not allowed to return to their homes in the fire area. The fire is 0 percent contained, and due to upcoming hot, dry and windy weather, the area will be extremely dangerous.

Air quality: Information on air quality is at New Mexico Department of Health Environmental Public Health Tracking, <https://nmtracking.org/fire>. An interactive smoke map at <https://fire.airnow.gov/> allows you to zoom into your area to see the latest smoke conditions.

Closures: New Mexico State Police have closed NM Highway 4 from the junction with NM 126 east to nearly the NM 501 intersection at the Los Alamos "back gate." Please stay clear of the Jemez Springs area to keep yourself and firefighters safe.

The Santa Fe National Forest issued a closure order restricting public access to the area around the fire. Specifically, all Forest Service lands within an area roughly defined by NM Highway 4 on the west, Valles Caldera National Preserve on the north, Bandelier National Monument on the east, and Zia Pueblo and Santo Domingo Pueblo on the south are closed to the public. Order Number 10-506. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/>

Fire Restrictions: Stage II Fire Restrictions are in effect for the Santa Fe National Forest, which prohibits building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, or stove including charcoal and briquettes. Smoking is also prohibited except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least 3 feet in diameter that is cleared of flammable material. For other activities prohibited under Stage II Fire Restrictions, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/>

Also, due to ongoing fire threats, Sandoval County will not issue burn permits.

Temporary Flight Restriction: There is a flight restriction on the area over the fire (10 nautical miles southwest of Los Alamos, NOTAM 2/2366). <https://www.tfr.faa.gov>. Drones over the fire are also prohibited.