



Cerro Pelado And Freelove Fire Update Friday, April 29, 2022

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InciWeb: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8075/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/2022.Cerropeladofire> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SantafeNF>

Due to red flag warnings, dry conditions and strong gusty northwest winds, the communities of Cochiti Mesa and Peralta Caynon are under a “Go” evacuation status.

COMMUNITY MEETING: A public meeting about the Cerro Pelado fire will be held tomorrow, Saturday April 30, from 5:30 to 6:30 pm at the Jemez Mountain Baptist Church, 6 Riverview Court, Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Members of the Southern Area Red Team and agency representatives will discuss and answer questions about current progress and planned activities on the fire.

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. Three homes were lost in the fire.

Acreage: 7,245 **Containment:** 15 %

Personnel and Equipment: 379 total personnel; 20 engines, 1 Type 1 hand crew, 6 Type 2 hand crews, 2 Type 2 initial attack crews, 3 helicopters, 4 dozers, 1 rapid medical extraction unit and 5 water tenders.

Yesterday: Mop up continued from the northwest side of the fire, to the southwest corner, then east to Paliza Canyon. Containment has increased from 5 to 15%. Bulldozers worked from Paliza Canyon east toward Peralta Ridge. The east side of the fire near Reid Canyon increased in activity and moved toward Woodard Ridge, Colle Canyon, Bland Canyon and the Cochiti Mining District. Heavy smoke was visible due to large logs burning in the old Los Conchas fire footprint.

Freelove Fire: Yesterday afternoon a new fire started on the western side of the Valles Caldera National Preserve in the Freelove Canyon area. As of this morning 3.5 acres have burned in the old 2013 Thompson Ridge Fire footprint. Firefighters assigned to the Cerro Pelado fire assisted local resources with initial attack on the fire. Aviation resources were diverted from the Cerro Pelado fire. Helicopters dropped water and an airtanker dropped a load of retardant. Firefighters have completed firelines and are mopping up today. The Southern Area Red Team has assumed command of the fire, now known as the Freelove fire. The cause of the fire is unknown.

There was a well-attended public meeting in Los Alamos on Thursday night. Eighty participants attended in person and 300 attended via Zoom. The video of the meeting will be posted on the 2022 Cerro Pelado Fire Information Facebook page.

Today: Firefighters are preparing for active fire behavior. Mop up continues from the northwest side of the fire, to the southwest corner, then east to Paliza Canyon. Firefighters are increasing the depth of mop-up from 50 ft to 100 ft to provide additional protection for the Sierra de Los Pinos community. Chipping will continue on the west side of the fire toward the east to reduce burnable vegetation. They will improve firelines and search for hotspots as they move south toward Peralta Ridge. Crews will be added to the southeast corner of the fire due to increased fire activity expected in that area. The winds this afternoon may prohibit the use of aircraft, which will restrict ground resource work.

Weather and Fire Behavior: High winds are expected today and a Red Flag Warning has been declared by the National Weather Service from 9 am to 9 pm. Wind gusts will be up to 40 mph with low humidity. West winds will strengthen in the morning and shift to the northwest. The strongest winds are likely to occur just after noon, bringing cooler temperatures in the 50s to low 60s. The northwesterly winds are expected to push the fire to the southeast. Wind gusts of up to 40 mph could cause spotting up to 1 mile. Dry air and winds will combine, creating critical conditions across the region. Saturday will bring warmer temperatures in the wake of the cold front, but wind speeds will decrease.

Very low relative humidity and high winds will increase fire intensity in hotspots today. The probability of ignition is 96% with spotting up to one mile. Wind alignment with the San Juan drainage will increase fire intensity and spread potential along the Forest Service 10 and 270 roads.

The east side of the fire in the Las Conchas fire area will continue to actively burn and move to the east. Large logs and stumps in recently burned areas off of the FR 270 system will continue to burn. Pockets of unburned fuels may exhibit very active burning with single and group torching possible. Spotting up to a mile is possible.

Evacuations, Shelter Areas: The Sandoval County Fire Department and Emergency Management will provide updated information on evacuations, as needed. **Due to red flag warnings, dry conditions and strong gusty northwest winds, the communities of Cochiti Mesa and the Peralta Canyon are under a “Go” evacuation status. Evacuations for the Sierra De Los Pinos remain in “set” mode, meaning being ready to leave at a moment’s notice. If conditions change and the fire threatens the community again, these areas could return to “Go.”**

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: NM Highway 4 remains open to local traffic only. Motorists should drive slowly along the highway with headlights on. **Fire equipment and firefighters will be travelling along Highway 4 and accessing the fire, especially at intersections with FR 10 and FR 280. If heavy traffic impedes firefighting efforts and endangers firefighter safety, Highway 4 could be closed again.**

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/>

Valles Caldera National Preserve remains closed until further notice.

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://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_2_2366.html. Drones over the fire are also prohibited.