



Cerro Pelado Fire Update Wednesday, May 11, 2022

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

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SantafeNF>

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

Acres: 43,376 acres **Containment:** 11%

Personnel and Equipment: 1,017 total personnel; 47 engines, 11 Type 1 hand crews, 15 Type 2 hand crews, 6 Type 2 initial attack crews, 9 helicopters, 2 scooper planes, 10 dozers, 1 masticator, 2 ambulances, 1 rapid medical extraction unit and 17 water tenders. 2 Air National Guard helicopters are on standby.

Yesterday: A Red Flag Weather warning was in effect. Though the area experienced strong gusts and low relative humidity (RH), no drastic fire movement occurred. Wind conditions allowed air operations to continue throughout most of the day, with scooper planes and helicopters dropping water throughout the fire area. Crews concentrated northeastern fire operations around Forest Road (FR) 287, using this road as a primary containment line east of Alamo Canyon. Firefighters continued to establish and strengthen containment lines along the eastern perimeter of the fire, where the fire continued backing and flanking. Rocky terrain reduced the intensity of the southern portion of the fire and crews monitored as it slowly crept toward Highway 267. Firefighters strengthened containment lines along the fire's western perimeter near Hondo Canyon. The northwestern corner of the fire remained contained. The use of heavy equipment like dozers and masticators reduced fuels and viability. The structure protection group continued operations throughout all areas. Fire operations coordinated with the Pueblo of Cochiti and their resources, continuing to assess and provide protection for structures in the Cochiti Lake area.

Today: A Red Flag Weather warning is still in effect due to sustained windy and dry conditions with low relative humidity (RH). These conditions are expected to contribute to fire growth potential. The strongest gusts will occur in the late afternoon and early evening hours before a dry cold front moves into the area. Air operations will begin as soon as conditions allow, before strong evening winds create unsafe flight conditions. The use of heavy equipment like dozers and masticators will resume to reduce fuels and fuel viability, especially along the southern and northern fire perimeters, which are more conducive to heavy equipment operations.

In the northeastern portion of the fire, fuel has become sparse as the fire moves northeast through the Las Conchas fire footprint. Crews will resume work on FR 280 to reinforce the containment line and will concentrate operations around FR 287. Firefighters will also continue to establish and strengthen containment lines along the eastern perimeter of the fire, especially along Dome Lookout Road, where the fire will continue backing and flanking eastward. Rocky terrain has reduced the fire intensity of the southern portion. Crews will resume monitoring as it slowly creeps toward Highway 267. Firefighters will strengthen containment lines along the fire's western perimeter near Hondo Canyon. The northwestern portion of the fire remains contained and crews will resume evaluation. Crews will monitor spot fires throughout the fire area and will suppress them as they occur.

Weather conditions, difficult terrain, and environmental hazards will continue to challenge direct suppression efforts. Firefighters and line safety officers are using lookouts, communications, escape routes and safety zones (LCES) to protect

line personnel. Firefighters are rotating out of extreme smoke conditions to help relieve fatigue. Wind events continue to create hazards from falling trees, so active mitigation measures are necessary across the incident to protect human life.

Operation crews continue to communicate with tribal representatives, community leaders, private cooperators, and Los Alamos National Laboratory staff to coordinate firefighting resources, protect structures, and keep community members safe. The National Park Service will continue structure protection in Bandelier National Monument and Valles Caldera National Preserve. The structure protection group will continue operations throughout all areas.

Weather and Fire Behavior: A Red Flag Warning is in effect as gusty south winds and low RH create critical fire weather conditions. Winds are expected to increase Wednesday with south/southwest winds of 30-35 mph. Gusts up to 45 mph will occur across the fire and will be strongest across the eastern half. RH will remain around 10 percent with temperatures in the 70s to lower 80s. There will be some afternoon clouds.

Conditions will contribute to fire growth potential, especially on the east side of the fire. Strong west winds may push the fire north and east, with low-intensity fire activity occurring in the Los Conchas Fire footprint. Low fuels in this area will impede the fire's ability to build a large fire front. The north portion of the fire will continue to back slowly towards containment lines along Highway 4.

Evacuations, Shelter Areas: Los Alamos County remains in "Set" evacuation level. The communities of Cochiti Mesa and the Peralta Canyon area, including Cox Ranch, remain under "Go" evacuation status. Four additional residences are evacuated in the Cox Ranch area between mile marker 36 and 40 along Highway 4. Los Alamos residents that have special needs or are access-challenged will continue evacuation. Los Alamos High School is closed until further notice. Evacuations for Sierra de Los Pinos and Valles Caldera National Preserve remain in "Set" mode, meaning residents should be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Jemez Springs, La Cueva and Cochiti Lake area remain in "Ready" status. Counties will provide updated information on evacuations as needed.

Air quality: Winds will blow smoke and dust into communities north and northeast of the fires, including the communities of Los Alamos, White Rock, and Santa Clara. Overall conditions are expected to remain GOOD to MODERATE. Santa Fe and Cochiti Pueblo could see brief periods of light smoke and haze. 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: Highway 4 remains closed to all traffic from mile marker 34 to mile marker 50 (at the junction of Highway 4 and 501) due to fire activity. Fire equipment and firefighters will be working along Highway 4 and accessing the fire, especially at intersections with FR 10 and FR 280. Heavy traffic impedes firefighting efforts and endangers firefighter safety. The most updated road closure information can be found here: <https://www.nmroads.com/mapIndex.html>

The Santa Fe National Forest has issued a [closure order](#) for the Cerro Pelado fire area and a second [closure order](#) for the Cerro Pelado Firefighter Camp along FR 376. The purpose of both orders is to protect public health and safety due to extreme fire danger in the Restricted Area. Bandelier National Monument and Valles Caldera National Preserve remain closed until further notice.

Fire Restrictions: [Stage II Fire Restrictions](#) are in effect for the Santa Fe National Forest, which prohibits all campfires and other hazardous activities. Due to ongoing fire threats, Sandoval County will not issue burn permits. Stage III Fire Restrictions are in effect for Cochiti Pueblo.

Temporary Flight Restriction: There is a flight restriction on the area over the fire (10 nautical miles southwest of Los Alamos, NOTAM 2/2366) to provide a safe environment for firefighting operations. Drones over the fire are also prohibited because their presence can disrupt air resources and pose additional fire hazard. More information: https://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_2_6919.html.