



## Cerro Pelado Fire Update Wednesday, May 4, 2022

**Hours:** 8 am-8 pm **Phone:** 505-312-4593 **Email:** [2022.CerroPelado@firenet.gov](mailto:2022.CerroPelado@firenet.gov)  
**InciWeb:** <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8075/> **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/SantafeNF>  
**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/2022.Cerropeladofire>

**Join us for a virtual public meeting via Facebook Live this evening, May 4, from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. at <https://fb.me/e/2ifCjthVw> You do not need a Facebook account to view.**

**Cerro Pelado 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:** 26,927 acres **Containment:** 13%

**Personnel and Equipment:** 645 total personnel; 33 engines, 2 Type 1 hand crews, 9 Type 2 hand crews, 5 Type 2 initial attack crews, 5 helicopters, 2 scooper planes, 9 dozers, 2 masticators, 2 ambulances, 1 rapid medical extraction unit and 12 water tenders.

**Yesterday:** Despite Red Flag weather conditions, fire growth was modest due largely to expected flanking fires as they steadily progressed toward constructed lines and rocky terrain to the south. Firefighters worked along Highway 4 on the northwest side of the fire toward the northeast by Cox Ranch, thinning dense brush and trees, and preparing to chip removed vegetation. U.S. Department of Energy masticators helped grind up burnable vegetation along the highway, which remained closed from mile marker 27 to mile marker 59. The fire remained south of the highway. An area near the northwest corner of the fire rekindled and was visible from the Sierra De Los Pinos community, but it was well within the perimeter of the fire and did not threaten structures. Crews continued mop up and patrol on the northwest side of the fire, to the southwest corner and east to Paliza Canyon. Helicopters continued firing operations with aerial ignition on the southwest side of the fire near Peralta Ridge to keep fire intensity low near old growth timber.

Firefighters continued to improve firelines along the Alamo Trail and Forest Road (FR) 289 for containment on the east side of the fire. They continued evaluating and strengthening protection around homes, with no new structural losses. Super scooper planes scooped water from Cochiti Lake and dropped it on Rabbit Mountain and Cochiti Mesa. Coordination between the Incident Team and the Jemez Pueblo and Cochiti Pueblo was crucial in identifying strategies for firefighting if the fire moves south. Portable weather stations were installed near the Cerro Pelado lookout and Dome Mountain to help meteorologists and fire behavior analysts better predict fire conditions.

**Today:** Firefighters will continue to work along the perimeter of the fire along Highway 4 on the north, FR 266 on the west, FR 270 on the south, and FR 289 on the east to improve firelines. A priority is to improve firelines along the northeast corner of the fire, along the Alamo Trail from Highway 4 to FR 289. Firefighters will install hoses in this area. They will also coordinate with the National Park Service in this area for structure protection for Bandelier National Monument and Valles Caldera National Preserve. Aerial ignition will continue today to protect old growth timber near Peralta Ridge. Super scooper airplanes may scoop water out of Cochiti Lake to help fight the fire if winds allow. On the north side of the fire, firefighters will improve firelines along Highway 4 by Cox Ranch with thinning and chipping operations. Structure protection will also continue in this area, continually evaluating options for protection. Firefighters will continue coordination with the Cochiti Pueblo and begin assessing and protecting structures in the Cochiti Lake area. Aerial ignition will continue to protect old growth near Peralta Ridge, as needed to ensure containment of the fire.

**Weather and Fire Behavior:** Temperatures will be in the low 60s today. Winds out of the west will be 12 mph with gusts to 25. Weather and fuel conditions will continue to support active fire behavior across the eastern half of the incident and moderate fire behavior. On the northwestern portion of the fire, it will continue to back toward Highway 4. If winds channel through the canyon above Kitty Lake, an increase in downslope spread is likely. On the west, fire is expected to continue moving to the south across Oaks Mesa. As the fire moves farther southeast, a reduction in burnable vegetation will help slow growth in that direction. On the southwest, the fire should hang up when it reaches rock washes and sparse vegetation above Cochiti Pueblo, but continue to move through thin strips of mixed conifer in canyon bottoms. In the northeast, winds will continue to support fire spread to the east and north. If it crosses Highway 4, it will rapidly spread in heavy grasses of the Valles Caldera National Preserve. If the fire crosses east of the caldera into mixed conifer and dead and down vegetation and gets established, it will be very active with spotting distances up to ½ mile.

**Evacuations, Shelter Areas:** The communities of Cochiti Mesa and the Peralta Canyon area, including Cox Ranch, remain under a “Go” evacuation status. The Sandoval County Fire Department and Emergency Management will provide updated information on evacuations, as needed. Evacuations for 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.” Los Alamos County remains in “Ready” status.

**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:** Highway 4 remains closed to all traffic from mile marker 47, 14 miles east of Sierra De los Pinos to mile marker 50, 14 miles west of White Rock due to fire activity. Highway 4 is also closed to non-local traffic at mile marker 35 (2 miles east of Sierra De los Pinos). Motorists should drive slowly along the highway with headlights on. Fire equipment and firefighters will be traveling 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 issued Closure Order Number 10-506 ([www.fs.usda.gov/detail/santafe/alerts-notices/?cid=stelprd3802009](http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/santafe/alerts-notices/?cid=stelprd3802009)), 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. The Forest also issued Closure Order Number 10-507 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 due to fire activity 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\\_6919.html](https://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_2_6919.html). Drones over the fire are also prohibited.