

HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



The Federal Emergency Management Agency

May 24, 2002

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Director's Corner
Resources Available
Completing Your Claim
Tips for Personal Property Lists

TOLL-FREE TELEREGISTRATION AND INFORMATION LINE:

1-888-748-1853

EMAIL and WEBSITES:

cerrograndenewsletter@fema.gov
director@cerrograndfire.com
www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com
www.fema.gov/cerrogrande

SERVICE CENTER:

Located in Los Alamos in the Mari-
Mac Plaza
Hours: 9 - 6 Monday - Friday

COMMUNITY OMBUDSMAN:

Bill Lehman
Office: 661-3121
Cellular: 505-934-9698

MITIGATION SPECIALIST:

Dale Lowe
Office: 661-3121
Cellular: 505-934-9768

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

When we opened our offices on August 28, 2000 there was no end in sight. We had what seemed like an endless number of questions to answer and policy, procedures and a program to establish. I find it amazing that we will be wrapping the program up in a little more than 90 days.

During the next three months we have much to accomplish. We have approximately 400 claimants whose claims are more than six months old. We are encouraging these claimants to come in immediately and let us help them complete their claim. We want to work with them to assure that they are able to complete their Proof of Loss before August 28, 2002, which is when extensions end. The Proof of Loss is the claimant's final statement of losses due to the Cerro Grande Fire. If a Proof of Loss is not received by August 28, we will make a decision on that claim based on the information in the file. The claimant will not be able to appeal that decision and will also lose their 5% preparation expense fee. Because we do not want this to happen to anyone, we are working very hard to provide every means of assistance possible to help these claimants complete their claims before the deadline.

This edition of HORIZONS lists some of the resources we have put in place to assist individuals in completing their claims. If you have any suggestions of additional resources that would assist individuals in completing claims, please contact us. In addition, if you are having difficulty completing your claim, please contact your claims reviewer or Bill Lehman, our community ombudsman. They will be happy to assist you. I can be contacted at: director@cerrograndefire.com.

Resources Available

A variety of resources are available to provide additional assistance to survivors who lost their homes in the fire, especially to help compile personal property lists:

Computer User's Group – This volunteer group can provide training and assistance in creating a spreadsheet to detail a claimant's personal property list. An inventory list of what is typically found in each room of a home and the range of costs for these items is also available through this group.

Fire Survivor Mentors – Survivors who have gone through the process of putting together their personal property lists are willing to assist others in completing their claims. These mentors can provide emotional support, practical tips and guidance in getting through the process of completing a personal property list.

Pick a Personal Property Day. By choosing to set aside a half-day or a full day, claimants can gather the needed emotional support and move through the process more quickly. A FEMA community outreach worker or a mentor can assist you.

(CONT'D)

Resources Available (CONT'D)

Friends, Family, Spiritual Advisors and Mental Health Professionals – Survivors who have completed their personal property lists often say it was a very emotional, grief-filled experience. It may be important to reach out for additional needed support to complete the process.

Claim Reviewers –Your FEMA claim reviewer or your personal representative can provide guidance in completing the personal property list.

Community Ombudsman and Community Outreach Worker - Bill Lehman, FEMA's community ombudsman and Community Outreach Worker, Rorie Hanrahan are available to provide additional assistance to claimants.

Although many can assist with completing a claimant's personal property inventory list, the ultimate responsibility rests with the claimant.

For more information about any of these resources or to discuss concerns about your claim, contact Bill Lehman or Rorie Hanrahan at 661-3121.

Completing Your Claim by the Deadline is Critical

The Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims staff is committed to making sure you receive all compensation you are entitled to under the Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act. If you have been granted an extension to keep your claim open longer than the typical six months, it is vital that you complete your Proof of Loss before August 28, 2002, or your extension deadline, whichever comes first. The Proof of Loss is the claimant's final statement of losses due to the Cerro Grande Fire. Extensions are being granted until August 28, 2002.

If a Proof of Loss is not received by August 28, 2002, a decision will be made on the amount of compensation you are due, based on the information you have already submitted. If you miss the August 28, 2002 deadline for submitting a Proof of Loss, you will not be able to appeal that decision and you will lose the 5% preparation expense fee. In addition, if we do not receive from you a Proof of Loss, you may be required to repay any partial payments that were received.

Claim reviewers need the personal property lists weeks in advance to prepare a Proof of Loss for signature by August 28, 2002.

We can assist you in completing your Proof of Loss and meeting your claim deadline in order to prevent these consequences. Call your claims reviewer or FEMA's Community Ombudsman, Bill Lehman at 661-3121 if you have questions about your deadline or need assistance in completing your claim.

Tips for Completing Personal Property Lists

Some survivors who have completed their personal property lists are offering these tips that might help others in completing a personal property list:

- List one room at a time, trying to remember what was there. OCGFC provides worksheets naming items in a particular room likely to trigger memories.
- Mentally walk through your house. What do you see? Paintings? Dishes? Books? Furniture? You'll begin to see more than you thought at first.
- Make a map of major pieces in a room. Then make a separate list for each piece. What is on it, in it, around it?
- Make lists of items based on activities or hobbies. For example list everything you would take camping.
- Carry a note pad or recorder with you. Throughout the day you will remember things lost. Make notes when you are shopping.
- For computer users, develop a spreadsheet to keep track of lost items.
- If possible, revisit places where you obtained special items.
- Think of people in your life. Who may have given items to you? Do they have pictures showing your personal property?
- Collect photos of events at your home from everyone you know. Look at the background of photos to see what was lost or to help trigger your memory.
- For odd, unusual, or unique items— provide documentation whenever possible in the form of pictures, etc. Your reviewer needs to understand what these items are to help determine their value.