

HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



May 1, 2002

**TOLL-FREE
TELEREGISTRATION AND
INFORMATION LINE:**

1-888-748-1853

Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday-Friday

WEBSITES:

www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com
www.fema.gov/cerrogrande

SERVICE CENTER:

The Cerro Grande Service Center is located in Los Alamos in the Mari-Mac Plaza, across from Smith's grocery, between GNC and the Blue Window Bistro

Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday-Friday

COMMUNITY OMBUDSMEN:

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

DIRECTOR:

Kathy Keith
Office: 505-424-5900
Email: director@cerrograndefire.com

To date, FEMA has paid in compensation more than \$16 million on more than 8,000 smoke damage and evacuation claims, and nearly \$4 million to businesses in Rio Arriba County.

Compensation Paid on Cerro Grande Fire Smoke Damage Claims

The Cerro Grande Fire began May 4, 2000, when the National Park Service started a prescribed burn in Bandelier National Monument. The Federal government took full responsibility for the fire and Congress passed legislation to pay people for damages they suffered as a result of the fire. The Cerro Grande Fire Assistance Act allows those who suffered losses as a result of the Cerro Grande Fire to file a claim until August 28, 2002.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was given the responsibility for paying compensation (money to pay for the damages) to those who suffered losses. FEMA set up the Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims and a toll-free Registration and Information Line.

If you had damage to your home, vehicle or personal property (such as carpet, clothes, furniture) from the smoke of the Cerro Grande Fire, if you evacuated, or lost income because of the fire, you may be eligible for compensation.

The Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims used satellite imagery to create a map to determine where the Cerro Grande smoke plume may have caused smoke damage and in some cases caused people to leave their homes.

“If you believe you received damages as a result of smoke from the Cerro Grande Fire and have not yet filed a claim, we encourage you to file now.”

When filing a claim, the following information will be required to complete your claim:

- Proof of where you lived in May of 2000
- Ownership of vehicles as of May of 2000
- Photo ID's of the person filing a claim
- Letter from your May 2000 employer verifying lost wages (if filing for lost wages)

Your claim cannot be paid without this information.

Eligible Expenses May Include:

These expenses may be eligible for reimbursement due to the Cerro Grande Fire:

Smoke damage expenses:

- Cleaning walls and windows
- Cleaning floors and carpet
- Cleaning furniture
- Cleaning vehicles
- Washing clothing

Evacuation expenses:

- Hotel or motel accommodations
- Mileage
- Phone calls
- Meals
- Laundry and dry cleaning
- Cost of lodging pets
- Costs of transporting and lodging livestock

Other expenses:

- Insurance deductible
- Lost wages
- Medical injury

If you believe you are eligible, call our toll-free Registration and Information Line at 1-888-748-1853 or visit our customer service center in Los Alamos.

Tell Your Neighbor

Word of Mouth is the fastest way news travels in the Valley.

So, if you know of a family member, friend or neighbor who suffered losses as a result of the Cerro Grande Fire, encourage them to apply now, if they haven't already.

Need More Help?

If you have questions or concerns about your claim, call the toll-free Registration and Information Line at 1-888-748-1853. Our local operators can help you with questions or concerns about your claim.

If you still have concerns or questions about your claim, call Cerro Grande's Community Ombudsman, Bill Lehman. The ombudsman's job is to work as an advocate for the claimant and to assist them in resolving any problems or concerns they may have about their claim.

To reach Bill, call 1-888-748-1853 and ask to speak with the Community Ombudsman or call him directly at 505-661-3121.

How To File and Resolve A Claim

If you believe you suffered a loss as a result of the Cerro Grande Fire, to receive compensation, you must file a claim with FEMA's Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims. The process was designed to be as easy as possible.

Here is how it works if you have a simple smoke damage claim:

1. Call the toll-free Registration and Information Line at 1-888-748-1853 between 9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday.
2. You will receive a claim packet within two weeks of filing your claim by phone.
3. Based on the information you supplied by phone, the packet may include a settlement offer for your claim.
4. Read, complete and include all the required information.
5. Choose whether to accept or reject the compensation amount offered.
6. Send in the claims packet by the due date listed on the letter you receive with the packet.
7. If you accept the compensation amount offered and you have submitted all the required documentation, you can expect to receive a check within six weeks.
8. If you reject the compensation amount offered, write and sign a letter of appeal explaining why your award compensation is incorrect, include all information required and support your appeal with as much documentation as possible - i.e. receipts, photographs, etc.
9. If you are still unhappy with the decision, a two-level appeal process is available:
 - Appeal to the Director of the Office Cerro Grande Fire Claims
 - Elect binding arbitration, or judicial review by the U.S. District Court of New Mexico.