

# Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 5 – MARK BERNAL – INCIDENT COMMANDER



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## Containment increases Critical fire weather returns Sunday

Update 5/01/2022

**Acres:** 59,063 acres

**Containment:** 69%

**Location:** North of Ocate NM, approximately 46 miles north of Las Vegas, NM

**Start Date:** Sunday, April 17, 2022

**Cause:** Human, under investigation

**Fuels:** ponderosa pine, oak brush and grass

**Current Evacuations for Mora and Colfax Counties:** There are no changes to the evacuation status. Areas in **GO**: Philmont Scout Ranch Back Country West of State Road 21 in Colfax County; In Mora County, Los LeFebres, Los Huerros, and residents east of County Road 009 and north of NM Highway 120. Areas in **SET** status include Sweetwater, Rayado, Sunnyside, and Los Cocas. Residents of Miami and the Philmont Scout Ranch Headquarters are in **READY** status.

The Mora and Colfax County Sheriff's Offices are using the [Ready! Set! Go!](#) program for evacuation status that provides information on evacuation and evacuation preparation.

**An Evacuation center** is set up at Old Memorial Middle School, 947 Old National Rd, Las Vegas. The Colfax County Fairgrounds have been closed.

**Livestock:** The Taos Rodeo Grounds is available to residents from Mora if they need a place for horses. Contact: Livestock Inspector Ruben Baca 505-770-1490.

**Public Meeting:** Last nights at Cimarron High School was record and will be available on the Cooks Peak Fire Information Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/CooksPeakFireInfo/>.

**Fire Update:** Yesterday, firing operations occurred on the eastern flank of the Cooks Peak Fire to secure additional fireline. Aerial ignitions were utilized to remove the unburned pocket of fuel in Agueje Canyon, and to strengthen containment lines south of Sweetwater. Aviation resources also assisted with water drops to aid fire suppression efforts in the heavily timbered, rugged terrain and challenging topography of the north end of the fire near Urraca Mesa. Mop up and suppression repair work, including returning dozer lines to a more natural state, building water bars where needed and mending fences, occurred in areas where firelines have been secured and the fire is no longer a threat

Drones were spotted yesterday morning on the southeast side of the fire causing all aerial resources to be grounded. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/CooksPeakFireInfo/videos/291847116497757> for additional information. Please remember "if you fly, we can't".

Today, there is a high potential for increased fire activity on the Cooks Peak Fire. Art Gonzales, Fire Behavior Analyst, says "Drought stressed fuels and low humidity create conditions for increased fire behavior." Those conditions, along with Red Flag weather conditions, with 25-30 mph sustained winds and 45-50 mph gusts,

combined with large fires to the south and outflow winds from expected storms create unique suppression challenges for Cooks Peak fire crews. Due to high winds, limited aerial suppression will occur in the morning and flights will be grounded in the afternoon for the safety of crews.

Firefighters are working to complete and secure 109 miles of fireline. Today, they will patrol containment lines and work to contain the Cooks Peak Fire within the current footprint while protecting structures, property, and natural resources. Fire crews are securing the southwestern side of Gallinas Mesa and expect to need additional firing operations when weather conditions allow in the next few days to reinforce containment lines. This area is visible from Ocate and Ojo Feliz. Suppression emphasis will be on the active fire areas on the western and northwestern perimeter with hand tools, dozer lines and air support when possible. Crews continue to construct and strengthen containment and mop up where needed.

**Weather:** On Sunday, winds will decrease slightly, and temperatures climb by a few degrees higher than Saturday. Relative humidity will remain unseasonably dry. On Monday, another critical fire weather day is possible with strong gusty winds and low relative humidity.

**Highway Closures:** New Mexico Highway 120 remains closed from mile marker 26 to 3 miles west of Ocate due to fire activity and equipment entering the area to support firefighting efforts. Motorists are advised to delay travel or to seek alternate routes. State Road 21 from Polo Ranch to Cimarron is open to local traffic only, and remains closed to through traffic. Visit <https://nmroads.com/mapIndex.html> for additional information.

**Smoke:** Moderate smoke expected today during the morning with south-southwest winds. Smoke from fires to the west will produce periods of unhealthy for sensitive groups (USG) in Miami this afternoon into early evening. Cimarron will see good air quality changing to moderate in the late afternoon, into the evening's with smoke from fires to the west. Residents are encouraged to stay informed of potential changes by visiting the interactive smoke map at <https://fire.airnow.gov/>, which allows you to zoom into your area to see the latest smoke conditions.

**Aviation Restrictions:** There is a Temporary Flight Restriction over the Cooks Peak Fire. Firefighting aircraft fly at very low altitudes, typically just a couple hundred feet about the ground. This creates the potential for a mid-air collision. Any aircraft entering the fire area, including drones, could lead all firefighting aircraft to be grounded until they have left the fire area. Stay out of the airspace over the Cooks Peak Fire.

**Fire Restrictions:** Fire restrictions are being implemented to help reduce the chance of a wildfire. The New Mexico State Forester has implemented statewide fire restrictions. Smoking, fireworks, campfires open burning and open fires are prohibited. For more information see <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/forestry-news/>. The Bureau of Land Management, Farmington District has also implemented fire restrictions. Fireworks, campfires, smoking and operating machinery, including off road OHV use are restricted. Visit <https://www.blm.gov/programs/public-safety-and-fire/fire-and-aviation/regional-info/new-mexico/fire-restrictions> for details.

**More Information:**

**Inciweb:** <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8066/>

**New Mexico Fire information:** <https://nmfireinfo.com/>

**Smoke Outlook:** <https://outlooks.wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlook/b335b9f4>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/CooksPeakFireInfo/>

**Evacuations:** [Mora County Sheriff's Office](#) | [Facebook](#)

**Colfax County:** [http://www.co.colfax.nm.us/government/sheriff\\_s\\_department.php](http://www.co.colfax.nm.us/government/sheriff_s_department.php)