

HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



Federal Emergency Management Agency

September 28, 2001

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TOLL-FREE

TELEREGISTRATION LINE:

1-888-748-1853

TOLL-FREE INFORMATION LINE:

1-888-748-1853

EMAIL:

cerrograndenewsletter@fema.gov

WEBSITES:

www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com

www.fema.gov/cerrogrande

SERVICE CENTERS

Los Alamos: New location,
Mari-Mac Plaza, across from
Furr's, between GNC and Blue
Window Bistro

Hours: 9 A.M. – 6 P.M. Monday - Friday
9 A.M. – noon Saturday

OMBUDSMEN:

Individuals

Veronica Verde
Office: 747-4204
Cell: 505-934-9728

Businesses

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

Deputy Director Kathy Keith Takes Over as Acting Director

Kathy Keith, Deputy Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims (OCGFC), will take over as acting director. "As acting director, I've been given all authority to fulfill our responsibilities," Keith said.

The New Mexico native has worked on the recovery efforts from the Cerro Grande fire from its earliest beginnings. "When I saw how the fire affected my home state I wanted to be involved in the recovery efforts," Keith said.

Keith, who worked with the Department of Energy at the time, worked with an interagency team that drafted the initial proposal for the compensation plan. After Congress passed a different version, Keith remained closely involved with the program, eventually moving back home to New Mexico to work in the OCGFC.

Keith grew up in Tucumcari. After completing a degree in journalism and political science, she worked in radio and television before heading



Kathy Keith

to Capitol Hill. After working as a congressional staffer, she eventually landed at the Department of Energy. There Keith's focus was on energy issues related New Mexico's energy sites, including Los Alamos National Laboratories.

"Although I really enjoyed the experience of living and working in our nation's capitol, I love being back home in the land of blue skies and green chilies," said Keith.

Director Erbach Leaves Program

Don Erbach, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) OCGFC announced his resignation last week. Erbach, an Arkansas resident, was tapped for the position last November.

"It was with mixed feelings that I leave this program. On one hand, I am looking forward to being home and spending more time with my wife as we prepare for the arrival of our first child. On the other hand, I have come to care a great deal for the Cerro Grande Fire

Survivors and for the wonderful staff who make our program run," said Erbach.

"We thank Don for his hard work and leadership," said FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh. "I am pleased with the changes I've seen in this program. This program has done an exceptional job responding to unique needs of those impacted by the Cerro Grande fire. We have a great team in place who we can count on to continue to do an excellent job."



Project Recovery to End in November

Project Recovery of Northern New Mexico will continue providing services for the survivors of the Cerro Grande Fire Disaster until November 16, 2001. The program, which is funded by FEMA and the Center for Mental Health Services provides emotional support and education to individuals, families, and community organizations. All services are free and confidential.

According to the project coordinator, Doris Thielemann, "Closure of the project is a positive indication that the communities are healing and recovery is progressing. However, since normal recovery from a disaster takes one to three years, some individuals may still be in need of support and education. We are confident that the existing mental health and educational programs in the communities will be able to fulfill the remaining needs of survivors.

For additional information call (505) 661-1300.

All OCGFC policies, regulations and Cerro Grande Fire Assistance ACT are available at www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com

Assistance Available for Personal Property Lists

The Los Alamos Service Center for the OCGFC is continuing to offer assistance to make personal property lists easier to complete. The list will expedite the settlement of a fire claim and help make sure no items are inadvertently left out.

The one-on-one coaching from experts includes helping claimants make sure they create an inclusive list of all items lost in the fire. Sources for pricing lost items are also available.

For assistance, please contact the Community Ombudsman, Veronica Verde at 661-3121.

Española Service Center Closes

The OCGFC Service Center in Española is scheduled to close on Saturday, September 29, 2001.

"Although our program is changing, our commitment to those affected by the Cerro Grande Fire has not. We will continue to work hard to make sure that everyone who was impacted by the fire receives fair compensation for their losses," said Kathy Keith, Acting Director.

The toll-free teleregistration line (1-888-748-1853) will continue to be available to handle new registrations through August 28, 2002. The Information Line (1-888-748-1853) will continue to assist those who may have questions about their claim or the program. As well, the service center in Los Alamos is available for individuals.

There has been a drastic decrease in the volume of claims being filed with the OCGFC. The number of new claims coming in peaked in April with more than 3,000. In August, the num-

Reopening Your Claim

Your claim may be automatically reopened if you have closed your claim and signed the release and certification. A few of the reasons include: to add mitigation measures; for reimbursement of flood insurance premiums paid on or before May 12, 2002; you sold your property no later than August 28, 2002 and wish to file for diminution of value; you have additional personal property items that were not included in the original Proof of Loss, or eligible claimants, who are rebuilding their homes and have additional living expenses.

The Director has discretion to reopen your claim for other reasons. To request that your claim be reopened write a letter to the Director or complete a "Request to Reopen Claim" form.

You may obtain a "Request To Reopen Your Claim" form our service center, or on our website, www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com

ber of new claims decreased to about 800, with fewer claims coming in the door each week in September.

"As we move into the program's final year, we are continuing to consolidate and streamline our program to meet the changing demands," said Kathy Keith. "Our focus is on assisting those recovering from the fire in completing their claims.

In the recovery process, we're just the first step. Once people have dollars in hand, they have more choices in moving forward in their lives."

Claims Processing and Payment Unaffected By Terrorist Tragedies

Although FEMA is the lead recovery agency responding to the tragedies in New York and Washington D.C., the Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claim's (OCGFC) ability to process and pay claims has been unaffected.

"We want to assure the local communities that we will always have a core staff on board through August 2002," said Acting Director Kathy Keith. "In the last year of the program, we have to complete claims," Keith said. "In the recovery process, we're just the first piece. Once people have dollars in hand, they can make decisions about rebuilding their lives."

Cerro Grande Compensation Tops \$234 million

Individuals.....	\$109,201,207
Businesses	\$27,254,630
State and Local Governments	\$42,325,946
Tribal Governments	\$29,278,031
Not-For-Profit.....	\$155,415
Individual Mitigation.....	\$1,558,760
Community Mitigation..	\$25,028,694

**Numbers
as of 9/24/01**