

# HORIZONS

Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims



Federal Emergency Management Agency

July 6, 2001

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## CONTACT US!

Hours: 9 a.m.– 6 p.m. Monday - Friday  
9 a.m.–noon Saturday

**INFORMATION & TELEREGISTRATION:** 888-748-1853

## CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTERS

**Espanola:** Johnson Controls Bldg.,  
1027 N. Railroad

**Los Alamos:** IT Bldg., 235 Central  
Park Square.

**White Rock:** 134 State Road 4

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## WEBSITES:

[www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com](http://www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com)

[www.fema.gov/cerrogrande](http://www.fema.gov/cerrogrande)

## OMBUDSMEN:

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### Santa Clara and San Ildefonso

Joseph Hesbrook  
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Cell: 505-934-9699

### Los Alamos and White Rock Businesses

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

### Los Alamos and White Rock Individuals, M-Th, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Dorothy Hamory  
Office: 661-3121  
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## Los Alamos Family Completes Claim

The home of Michele and Chip Hinde stands like a Victorian oasis in the midst of a busy construction site. The blue, three-level duplex is surrounded by serene lawns and petunia boxes with newly planted ash trees far from the house.

Settled into their new home a little over a year after their former house was destroyed by the Cerro Grande Fire, the Hindes serve as an inspiration to others in their neighborhood.

When the forest fire swept down their North Community street 13 months ago, the Hindes were preoccupied with another problem. Their toddler son Christopher had just been released from the hospital and was still in delicate health and Michele was pregnant. The Hindes evacuated with only their photographs and their dog, fleeing to Albuquerque to be closer to medical care for Christopher.

From the first day of evacuation Michele believed that their home had burned, and on her first trip to the grocery store she returned with books of house plans. The Hindes lost no time beginning the rebuilding process and within seven months were living in a new duplex with their baby daughter Lily and Chip's parents as next door neighbors.

Recently the Hindes completed the compensation process with the Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims, drawing that part of their disaster recovery to a close. Michele Hinde says that with two pre-school children it was important for her to finalize her claim as quickly

as possible and free up her time for family matters.

Chip Hinde says that the process was stressful in many ways. One of the most



Hinde Family

helpful aspects was regular contact with both their claims reviewer and the OCGFC information line, 888-748-1853. They were able to track the process of their claim as often as needed.

Chip, an engineer at Los Alamos National Labs, says he and his family are personally changed by the fire. "We're definitely different people."

And yet in many ways, life is returning to normal. The Hinde's cat, JoJo, disappeared before the fire and couldn't be found for evacuation. Apparently JoJo escaped through drainage pipes and made his way to safety. He became a feral cat, surviving by his wits, but returned to the family's old address once it seemed safe. JoJo was captured and spent weeks at the veterinarian hospital recovering from his trauma. Today, fat and fluffy, he sits on the front porch of the Hinde's new home, welcoming visitors.



# Mitigation: Funds to Build Safer Homes and Communities

Communities recovering from disaster face all kinds of challenges, not the least of which is adding new words to their everyday vocabulary. As the rebuilding process is underway in Los Alamos, the word "mitigation" takes on a whole new significance for homeowners.

In the disaster context, mitigation is any action taken to make people and their property safer in the future. If your home was damaged or destroyed by the Cerro Grande Fire, you can apply for federal mitigation funds for a home that you are rebuilding or purchasing, or even one that was only damaged by the fire, within Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval or Santa Fe counties.

Homeowners can apply for up to 15 percent of compensation received to replace the structure and landscaping that was lost to the fire with more fire resistant materials. The Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims has worked out a procedure by which homeowners can receive funds in advance of actually completing the mitigation work. To receive this advance funding, claimants work out a mitigation plan, picking and choosing from 12 pre-approved acceptable measures. You also can submit proposals for other measures of your own choosing, although those proposals may require further analysis for environmental and historic preservation

impacts and therefore take more time and documentation.

Because each home is different and distinct when it comes to mitigation, "we strongly suggest that homeowners meet with the OCGFC Mitigation Specialist to work out a plan and determine how much money is available to upgrade fire and flood safety measures for your home. Please call Christopher Berti at the Los Alamos office (505-661-3121) to make an appointment. You may bring your architect, builder or other advisers to that meeting if you wish.

To learn more about this subject, you can read the OCGFC mitigation policy on our website, [www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com](http://www.cerrogrande.losalamos.com).

A few key points to remember about mitigation funding:

- Mitigation funds are to pay for *upgraded* safety measures. For example, if you are receiving compensation to rebuild your house, the compensation would pay for a 10-year, Type A, or relatively fire-safe roof. Mitigation funds may be granted on top of that amount to increase the safety level even higher, to perhaps a metal roof. The mitigation money is not intended to cover the full cost of such a

roof, but to *help* homeowners cover the cost.

- To be eligible mitigation funds, fire-related property losses must total more than \$2,000. Fifteen percent or less than the minimum would not allow for mitigation measures that could reasonably reduce a property's vulnerability to future risks.
- Los Alamos County also has a federally funded community mitigation program that can help residents plant fire-resistant landscaping or create other defensible space around their homes. For more information on that please contact the county, 662-8035

## Workshops Set For Personal Property Lists

The Office of Cerro Grande Fire Claims, Project Recovery, Interfaith, and the Senior Center's Computer User Group are co-sponsoring computer workshops 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 omitted.

The workshops will be small groups with one-on-one coaching from experts. Those who attend will learn to set up an EXCEL spreadsheet, identify lost items and discover ways to establish the price of lost items, including Internet searches.

Daytime workshops will be held Tuesday, July 10, 17, 24 and 31 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Evening workshops will be held Thursday, July 12, 19, 26, and Aug. 2 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. All sessions will be held at the Betty Erhart Senior Center's computer lab.

To register for a workshop please contact Dorothy Hamory at the Los Alamos Service Center, 661-3121.

### Cerro Grande Compensation Tops \$154 million

Individuals.....	\$81,409,223
Businesses .....	\$22,192,195
State and Local Governments .....	\$13,288,928
Tribal Governments .....	\$18,627,500
Not-For-Profit.....	\$155,179
Individual Mitigation.....	\$278,116
Community Mitigation..	\$18,189,248

**Total Payments: \$154,140,389  
As of 7/3/01**

### File by Telephone

The Office of Cerro Grand Fire Claims now is accepting fire claims by telephone. To file a Notice of Loss, which is the first step in the claims process, you may call our toll-free number, 1-888-748-1853.

Operators will be on duty to accept Cerro Grande Notices of Loss from

**9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays.**