



April 1, 2024

# THE CONEJOS COUNTY MESSENGER

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Welcome to our **fourth year** of the Conejos County Newsletter! As elected officials and county department directors, our goal is to inform our citizens of news stories, information and data through the periodic publication of a newsletter. The previous editions of newsletters are archived on the county website, [www.conejoscounty.colorado.gov](http://www.conejoscounty.colorado.gov)

In an effort to gain more exposure, we are posting this same file on Facebook and the Citizens for a Better Conejos County page.

Conejos County  
Website QR Code



## Annual Spring Time Fire Bans



As we come out of the Winter months, and into the windy months of Spring; we here at the Sheriff's Office thought we would attempt to clarify the Red Flag Rule when attempting to burn. So, what is the Red Flag Warning? Red flag warnings are issued when forecasts indicate that a combination of high temperatures, very low humidity and strong winds at a given location could create an environment that is conducive to

dangerous fires, according to the National Weather Service. The agency sets these warnings most often between February 1 and April 30, and again from October 1 to December 15, when typical weather conditions are consistent with those criteria. This information can be found at the National Weather Service website for your individual location or contact the San Luis Valley Regional Communication Center at 719-589-5807.

If a Red Flag Warning is in place for your area, what should you do? According to county ordinance, no one shall start an open fire in unincorporated Conejos County during a Red Flag Order and existing fires shall be extinguished immediately. It is worthy to note the Conejos County Board of County Commissioners or the Conejos County Sheriff, or his designee shall have the authority to declare an open fire ban whenever the danger of forest and grass fires is found to be high, and without further proceedings or ordinance. If a fire ban is put into place by the County Commissioners, County Sheriff, or his designee a news release will be published through newspaper, radio, or television broadcast along with county websites and social media. This information will describe the parameters of the ban and the duration as deemed necessary.

## **(Continued—Sheriff’s Office—Annual Springtime Red Flag Fire Bans)**

If a Red Flag is deemed necessary the County is automatically put into a Stage 1 Fire Ban which consists of the following restrictions

1. Open burning, except fires and campfires within permanently constructed fire grates in developed campgrounds and picnic grounds, charcoal grills and wood burning stoves at private residences in areas cleared of all flammable materials.
2. The sale or use of fireworks
3. Outdoor smoking except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials.

### **The following activities are exempt:**

1. Commercial or community fireworks displays properly permitted by the Sheriff or other appropriate authority
2. Fires contained within liquid-fueled or gas-fueled stoves.
3. Indoor fireplaces and wood-burning stoves.
4. Outdoor charcoal grills and wood-burning stoves during Stage 1 restrictions providing they are at private residences and in an area cleared of all flammable materials including dry vegetation.
5. Burn barrels providing they are at private residences and in an area cleared of all flammable materials including dry vegetation and covered with a screen. During Stage 2 barrels are prohibited from use.
6. Persons with a permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
7. Any federal, state or local law enforcement officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting agency in the performance of an official duty
8. Any further exemptions to either the meaning of terms of the enforcement of this ordinance shall be granted by the Sheriff or the Sheriff’s designee, or for exemptions upon or within state or federal agency, and only if the proposed action is deemed by the Conejos County Sheriff or the Sheriff’s designee, to be safe.

The above information is taken directly from Conejos County Ordinance 2020-1 of the Board of Conejos County Commissioners Open Fires and Open Burning in the Unincorporated areas of Conejos County, Colorado.

Any questions can be fielded at the Conejos County Sheriff’s Office: 14044 Crd G.5, Antonito CO 81120. Phone # 719-376-2196.

**Sheriff Garth Crowther**



*Conejos County, Colorado*



## **CONEJOS COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**17705 US Hwy 285, Suite B -- La Jara, CO 81140-0244 -- (719) 580-4133**

I This 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2024, I have decided to emphasize the CYBER Security Risk we ALL face each and every day. Our personnel information is constantly at risk! Therefore, in my opinion, it is imperative we do all that is possible to minimize this risk. All our on-line accounts, social media, personal and financial should have at least 3 layers on security (like user name, password, call back, etc.) and more if possible.

There should be security to get on your Internet, at home and at work. One should have security on your mobile phones, on your laptops and other user devices. One should not use the same passwords and usernames for all your devices.

I have included the following article for your information:

### **A government watchdog hacked a US federal agency to stress-test its cloud security**

**Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai@lorenzofb / February 29, 2024**



### (Continued—Office of Emergency Management)

A U.S. government watchdog stole more than 1GB of seemingly sensitive personal data from the cloud systems of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The good news: The data was fake and part of a series of tests to check whether the Department's cloud infrastructure was secure.

The experiment is detailed in [a new report by the Department of the Interior's Office of the Inspector General](#) (OIG), published last week.

The goal of the report was to test the security of the Department of the Interior's cloud infrastructure, as well as its "data loss prevention solution," software that is supposed to protect the department's most sensitive data from malicious hackers. The tests were conducted between March 2022 and June 2023, the OIG wrote in the report.

The Department of the Interior manages the country's federal land, national parks and a budget of billions of dollars, and hosts a significant amount of data in the cloud. According to the report, in order to test whether the Department of the Interior's cloud infrastructure was secure, the OIG used an online tool called [Mockaroo](#) to create fake personal data that "would appear valid to the Department's security tools."

The OIG team then used a virtual machine inside the Department's cloud environment to imitate "a sophisticated threat actor" inside of its network, and subsequently used "well-known and widely documented techniques to exfiltrate data." "We used the virtual machine as-is and did not install any tools, software, or malware that would make it easier to exfiltrate data from the subject system," the report read.

The OIG said it conducted more than 100 tests in a week, monitoring the government department's "computer logs and incident tracking systems in real time," and none of its tests were detected nor prevented by the department's cybersecurity defenses. "Our tests succeeded because the Department failed to implement security measures capable of either preventing or detecting well-known and widely used techniques employed by malicious actors to steal sensitive data," said the OIG's report. "In the years that the system has been hosted in a cloud, the Department has never conducted regular required tests of the system's controls for protecting sensitive data from unauthorized access."

That's the bad news: The weaknesses in the Department's systems and practices "put sensitive [personal information] for tens of thousands of Federal employees at risk of unauthorized access," read the report. The OIG also admitted that it may be impossible to stop "a well-resourced adversary" from breaking in, but with some improvements, it may be possible to stop that adversary from exfiltrating the sensitive data.

This test "data breach" was done in a controlled environment by the OIG, and not by a sophisticated government hacking group from China or Russia. This gives the Department of the Interior a chance to improve its systems and defenses, following a series of recommendations listed in the report.

Last year, [the Department of the Interior's OIG built a custom password cracking rig](#) worth \$15,000 as part of an effort to stress-test the passwords of thousands of the department's employees.

**Rodney King, Emergency Manager**

## Treasurer's Office

Spring greetings from the Conejos County Treasurer's Office! Here's an update for Spring 2024. Our office mailed out the 2023 tax notices on February 28, 2024. Because of computer IT issues they were mailed late. Therefore, the 1<sup>st</sup> half payments can be paid through the end of March without interest. Full payments are due by April 30, 2024 and 2<sup>nd</sup> half tax payments are due by June 15, 2024. If you would like a mailed tax receipt, please provide a self-addressed stamped envelope with your payment. Otherwise, your mailed-in check will serve as your receipt. Please note you can either mail your payment to: PO Box 97, Conejos, CO 81129, or pay online at: [conejoscounty.colorado.gov](https://conejoscounty.colorado.gov) or call our office to make a payment over the phone. Please be aware there is a small convenience fee for debit cards, credit cards and e-checks.

If you have specific questions regarding the Senior Property Tax Exemption, please contact the County Assessor's Office at (719) 376-5585. For questions on the Disabled Veterans' Exemption, Disabled Veteran Surviving Spouse Exemption, or Disabled Veteran Gold Star Spouse, please contact Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at (303) 914-5832.

If we can be of further assistance in the Treasurer's Office, please contact our office at (719) 376-5919. HAPPY EASTER!

**Mack Crowther, Treasurer**





# CONEJOS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## Greetings from the Conejos County Department of Social Services

Greetings,

In the month of April, we recognize Child Abuse awareness month and would like to acknowledge the difficult work that all of our Department of Social Services employees do to assist those in our community.

In 2012, the "[Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy](#)" child welfare plan detailed a common practice approach for Colorado's 64 counties and two tribal nations designed to strengthen the state's child welfare system. The plan included the development of a statewide hotline to provide one phone number to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

House Bill 13-1271, signed into law in May 2013, authorized the creation of a steering committee tasked with developing:

- A recommendation and implementation plan for a statewide hotline reporting system
- A recommendation for a corresponding public awareness campaign
- Recommendations for rules relating to the operation of the system and consistent practices for responding to reports and inquiries.

Committee members engaged in a process to develop a child abuse and neglect hotline reporting system in which every caller's concern is documented, and no child falls through the cracks.

### **About the hotline system**

The Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 844-CO-4-Kids, became operational on January 1, 2015. The hotline is designed to provide one, easy-to-remember toll-free phone number for individuals to use statewide to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

The hotline serves as a direct, immediate and efficient route to the counties, which are responsible for accepting and responding to child abuse and neglect inquiries and reports. All hotline calls will be routed to the county where a child resides.

The hotline system enables CDHS to capture critical information that it has not previously been able to track on a statewide basis, such as:

## (Continued Department of Social Services)

- Number of calls received
- Call volume
- Call duration
- Speed of answer
- Wait time
- Call transfers
- Abandonment rate

This data is critical to ensuring that calls across the state are handled quickly and appropriately.



Counties will maintain their current practices of receiving reports of abuse and neglect, but to ensure proper routing, each county must have a dedicated line for child abuse and neglect reporting. Calls made directly to a county's dedicated line will also be routed through the hotline system for data collection purposes. This process is automated and seamless and does not require putting a caller on hold or cause any delay in answering calls.

An ongoing statewide public awareness campaign engages all Coloradans in the prevention of child abuse and neglect and promotes the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

### How the hotline system works

- The main purpose of the hotline is to quickly route callers to the appropriate county. Callers will be asked to speak the name of the county where the child resides and then will be connected to that county.
- Callers who are not sure of the county, speak a language other than English or Spanish, or are deaf or hard of hearing will be directed to a Hotline County Connection Center representative who will assist them in identifying the appropriate county.
- The Hotline County Connection Center is located in Prowers County and is staffed 24/7, 365 days/year by trained call-takers, certified annually through the Colorado Child Welfare Training System.
- All callers will be connected with the appropriate county to speak with a call-taker who is trained and certified to use a screening guide designed to drive a structured process for interviewing callers who are reporting concerns of child abuse and neglect.

All callers may remain anonymous and reports will remain confidential.

**Graduating Seniors, please apply for the Conejos County DSS scholarship which is due 4/30/2024. You can visit the Conejos County Department of Social Services website for more details regarding the application process.**

**Nick Barela, DSS Director**

## Commissioners

### Commissioner Reports:

- ◆ The Board of County Commissioner Meeting Agendas are posted 24 hours in advance of all regular and special board meetings and work sessions in two locations on the county website. Agendas can be found on the opening page of the website by scrolling down to the monthly calendar or by clicking on the Commissioner's block and clicking on the upcoming agendas in the Commissioner's page. Regular board meetings are the first and third Thursday of each month.
- ◆ The Board of County Commissioner Meeting Minutes can be accessed by clicking on the Commissioner's page and then scrolling down on the page to the BOCC Minutes Archive block.
- ◆ The Commissioners have been working on two 1041 sets of regulations. A scheduled public hearing has been set for Thursday, May 9 at 6:00 p.m. at the Commissioner's meeting room in the courthouse. Depending on citizen's comments for or against on each set of regulations, tentative plans to adopt both sets of regulations will be at the May 16 regular meeting. As earlier reported in the October 1, 2023 edition, the Commissioners are working with the other 5 counties in the SLV on 1041 regulations for Water Projects for Export Outside the San Luis Valley as Designated as Matters of State Interest of Conejos County. The second set of 1041 regulations cover the Regulations for Site Selection and Construction of Major Facilities of a Public Utility.

**"The purpose and intent of these regulations is to facilitate identification, designation, and administration of matters of state interest consistent with the statutory requirements and criteria set forth in Section 24-65.1-101, et seq., C.R.S. These Regulations are necessary because of the intensity of current and foreseeable development pressures on and within the county. These regulations are necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, and welfare. " (1041 Article 1)**

**Commissioners Baroz, Garcia, and Jarvies**