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# News Release

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## **Dark, Divide, and Davis fires update or July 18, 2023**

**RESERVE, NM, July 18, 2023** – Several fires are being managed under a confine and contain strategy on the Gila National Forest, Reserve Ranger District. All of them were started by lightning strikes last week. Incident Commander Pete Valenzuela assumed command of the Dark Fire, Divide Fire, and Davis Fire yesterday evening. Crews continue to prepare roads and trails around the wildfires to be used to confine and contain them. Firefighters are also scouting range infrastructure, such as fences and plastic stock tanks and pipelines in order to protect these values at risk.

Currently, there are three Hotshot crews assigned, five Type 6 engines, one Type 3 engine, one Fire Use Module, one motor grader, one bulldozer, a helicopter, medical resources, a caterer, and various other overhead. Values at risk include private property, cultural resources, range infrastructure, threatened or endangered species habitat including Mexican spotted owl and Mexican gray wolf, recreation trails, and timber sale units.

“We are seeing moderate fire behavior, with fire flanking, backing, and creeping in grass, brush, and timber understory with occasional single tree torching events during the hottest period of the day,” said Incident Commander Pete Valenzuela. “These fires are cleaning up excessive dead and down material beneath the forest canopy.”

The Davis Fire, located north of Collins Park, east of the Continental Divide Trail, has grown to 100 acres. Crews plan to conduct burnout operations along the Continental Divide Trail in order to use it as a containment feature. As a result, hikers could encounter live fire along part of the section of trail east of Eagle Peak from Cox Canyon trailhead south to Bursum Road. Signs are posted at trailheads north and south of the Davis Fire.

The Dark Fire is located on Corner Mountain about 18 miles southeast of Reserve, New Mexico. It is exhibiting moderate fire behavior, flanking, backing, and creeping in grass, brush, and timber understory within the perimeter of the 1998 B.S. Fire. It has grown to 250 acres. There is a large amount of down woody material throughout the fire area available for fire consumption.

The Divide and Hay fires will be discussed together as Divide Fire. Together they cover approximately 700 acres on the south side of Elk Mountain and in T Bar Canyon. Divide Fire is

exhibiting moderate fire behavior, backing, flanking, and torching single trees. It is burning in grass, brush, and timber understory.

All three incidents received minimal precipitation yesterday, moderating fire behavior. The weather forecast calls for hotter than normal temperatures, with 40% to 70% likelihood of showers and thunderstorms daily for the next week. Gusty, erratic winds are expected, associated with passing storms. For more information contact Maribeth Pecotte at 575-388-8211 or [Maribeth.Pecotte@usda.gov](mailto:Maribeth.Pecotte@usda.gov).

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