



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 5 – Dave Gesser– INCIDENT COMMANDER

Utility outages continue as cooler, wetter weather help firefighters on the ground; localized flooding remains a threat Daily Update, Friday, June 21, 2024

Public Information Line: 575-323-8258

Media Information Line: 575-323-8053

Phone Line Hours: 8 am – 8 pm

Email: 2024.southfork@firenet.gov

Acres: South Fork – 16,349; Salt – 7,652

Location: South Fork – Ruidoso Area
Salt – 7 mile west of Mescalero, NM

Fuels: mixed conifer, grass, pine/juniper

Start Date: June 17, 2024

Personnel: 1,006

Containment: 0%

Resources: 22 Crews, 87 Engines, 15 dozers, and 16 water tenders. There are also helicopters and air tankers available for bucket and retardant drops if the need arises.

Highlights: Utility services – including electricity, water, internet and phones – remain shutdown across the South Fork and Salt fires. Power and service outages will continue to impact communications, making it difficult to contact residents and visitors in the area.

Fire Activity: The South Fork and Salt fires experienced minimal fire behavior on Thursday due to the variable precipitation on Wednesday and persistent high humidity into Thursday. Precipitation ranged from substantial rain and hail (up to 1.62”) to scarce sprinkles and scattered showers throughout day and overnight firefighting operations.

The cooler weather and moderate fire conditions observed on Thursday are expected to continue into Friday. Firefighters will continue constructing firelines and utilizing hand crews and bulldozers to protect homes, properties and critical infrastructure.

Crews on the South Fork fire continue engaging the fire with hand tools directly at its edge, utilizing hose along handlines and dozer lines to extinguish smoldering fuels and building fireline with machinery. Firefighters will also continue to conduct mop up operations, extinguishing and/or removing burning material along the fire’s edge to reduce the likelihood of fire creeping past control lines, where feasible.

Firefighters on the Salt fire will construct control lines, prepare new line where needed and conduct point protection to protect private property and critical infrastructure in the area. Ground and air ignitions will be used where needed to burn out fuels between constructed firelines and active fire.

Damage and structure assessments have commenced, along with adding additional protection needs as they are discovered.

Weather: Cooler temperatures, much higher relative humidity and light winds are expected on Friday. Thunderstorms are expected to develop bringing the potential for areas of heavy rain, flash flooding, and debris

flows this afternoon.

Smoke: Smoke will continue to be observed across both the South Fork and Salt fires today. Individuals sensitive to smoke should take precautions and use the New Mexico Department of Health 5-3-1 Visibility Method to determine if it's safe to be outside. For more information visit [Air Quality: https://nmtracking.doh.nm.gov/environment/air/FireAndSmoke.html](https://nmtracking.doh.nm.gov/environment/air/FireAndSmoke.html)

Evacuations: Mandatory evacuation orders remain in effect for several areas in and near both the South Fork and Salt fires. Evacuation information can be found at www.nmfireinfo.com. Road and trail closures are in effect throughout the fire area. Both Highway 48 and Highway 70 at Apache Summit are closed; the open evacuation route is Highway 70 to Roswell. State Hwy 48 is closed from Alpine Village/University to State Hwy 220. US 70 is closed from mm 249 (intersection NM 244), 4 miles east of Mescalero, to mm 258, 2 miles east of Carrizo.

Closures: A South Fork Fire Emergency Closure Order was issued on 6/20/2024 for national forest lands within the Smokey Bear Ranger District. The identified areas, and roads and trails therein, are closed to public access to provide enhanced safety of firefighting personnel and the public.

A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is also in place over the fire area. Visit <https://www.tfr.faa.gov> for more information. Drone flights are also prohibited within this area. If you fly, we may have to ground our air resources.

More information:

[Inciweb: https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/nmmea-south-fork-and-salt](https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/nmmea-south-fork-and-salt)