



FIRE INCIDENT UPDATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Start Date: Thursday, July 11, 2024

Location: 14 miles northwest of Oracle

Personnel Assigned: 230

Evacuation: GO lifted at 10 am Sunday, July 14, 2024

Resources: 9 hand crews, 9 engines, 4 water tenders, 1 dozer

Cause: Lightning

Acres: 31,727 **Containment:** 5%

Freeman Fire Update Sunday, July 14, 2024

Summary: Overnight weather over the last few days remains favorable to firefighters as they work toward full suppression and 100% containment. Cooler temperatures and increased relative humidity levels kept fire activity quiet through the night again. All established containment lines are holding. At 10 am this morning, the GO status will be lifted for the residents of Willow Springs Ranch. All impacted residents will be returned to a READY status. Roads within the fire area remain closed to the public and only accessible to homeowners in the area. Those roads include: Willow Springs Road at State Route 77, Willow Springs Road at Freeman, Willow Springs Road at Camino Rio, Freeman at Barkerville, and Freeman at State Route 79.

An aerial mapping mission on Saturday reported the fire at 31,727 acres with 5% containment to report. Along the north side of the fire, crews resume efforts to secure and hold established containment line in the area of Willow Springs Ranch and Freeman Roads. They will also resume patrols along the northwestern, northeast and southern flanks of the fire checking for any remaining heat or smoke along the fire's edge. In those areas crews are conducting mop up, a tactic used to extinguish or remove material still burning down to the mineral soil in or around the fire area. The southwest and west sides of the fire have stayed the most active over the past couple of days. A lot of heat still remains in those areas. The fire is hung up in rough and rugged terrain and crews must wait until the fire backs down out of the Black Mountains until they can safely engage. However, hand crews continue with suppression efforts along that flank conducting firing operations within a wash as a way to slow the spread of the fire as it moves into flatter terrain. Resources are working to bring strategically placed fire up the hillside to stop the fire from advancing into flat country and into dense fuel too quick. Overall suppression objectives include, keeping the fire south and east of Freeman Road, north of Willow Springs Road, and west of power line road. As temperatures warm up throughout the day, unburned pockets of fuel within the fire's interior will burn off, producing large columns of smoke visible to nearby communities including to Oracle and to drivers along SR 77 and 79. Fire operations will fly the fire again today to provide intel for ground resources. Multiple hand crews, engines, and water tenders remain assigned. Additional medic support teams arrived on the incident today. In addition, Freeman Fire resources including, one hand crew, an engine, and dozer will be used as an initial attack group to support any new starts within the area. Afternoon thunderstorms are forecast again today with the chance for outflow winds with gusts up to 50 mph.

The fire started Thursday, July 11, 2024, from a lightning strike near the Oak Well Camp. A second lightning strike occurred almost a mile away eventually merging the two fires. Late Thursday night, a storm system moved across the fire area producing outflow winds that fanned the fire in all directions and pushed it out to the southeast toward ranch structures. At that time, and due to the proximity of the fire to the Willow Springs Ranch, fire operations made the decision to evacuate the ranch. Residents in Pinal County can sign up for emergency alert notifications at: <https://www.pinal.gov/1335/PENS---Pinal-Emergency-Notification-Syst>.

Weather: Moisture expected to increase over the weekend resulting in an increased chance for thunderstorm activity. A potential for outflow winds of 50+ mph.

Safety: Firefighting aircraft and drones are a dangerous combination. Drones in the area could lead to accidents or slow down wildfire suppression operations. If you fly...we can't.

Fire Restrictions: Stage 1 fire restrictions in effect on State Trust lands in Pinal County. Restriction info: <http://wildlandfire.az.gov/>.

Incident Information: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/aza3s-freeman-fire>

Twitter: @azstateforestry: <https://twitter.com/azstateforestry>

Facebook: Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management: <https://www.facebook.com/arizonaforestry>

Ready, Set, Go: <https://ein.az.gov/ready-set-go>