



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



Preparation to begin ignitions nears completion Daily Update: September 7, 2024

West Fire - 30 Acres

Preacher Fire - 3 Acres

Start Date: August 28, 2024

Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ

Personnel: 427

Cause: Lightning

Containment: 0%

Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Highlights/Operations: Preparation of firelines on both fires is nearly complete. The safest, most effective and ecologically beneficial way to contain these fires is by using ignitions. Using fire to reduce overgrown forests will also provide future protection from wildfires that may be more difficult to suppress. Aerial and hand ignitions are expected to begin on Sunday, Sept. 8 for both the West and Preacher fires. Ignitions will happen in a strategic way to reduce smoke impacts, ease the fire to the containment lines and achieve desirable ecological outcomes. On the West Fire, ignitions are anticipated to take seven days across approximately 16,700 acres. The Preacher Fire ignitions are likely to take two days across 3,200 acres. Firefighters holding the containment lines will begin mop up right away. This will decrease unnaturally high accumulations of fuels and the potential for future fires to burn with unnaturally high severity, aligning with the Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wildfire-crisis>.

When ignitions begin, residents will see more smoke. Fire managers have been working closely with meteorologists and smoke experts from the Forest Service and AZ DEQ to determine the best time to begin ignitions. Beginning Monday a detailed smoke outlook will be available to the public. During ignitions, smoke may settle in low-lying areas overnight. Residents are encouraged to close windows at night to avoid smoke impacts. Talk with your doctor and plan for how to manage your health conditions when it is smoky. Additional resources for how to prepare for wildfire smoke can be found at <https://www.airnow.gov/wildfire-guide-factsheets/>

Once ignitions begin, the Incident Management Team will staff a night shift to patrol the fire and implement the structure protection plans both day and night. After closely coordinating with the Gila County Sheriffs Office and local emergency management, fire managers do not anticipate the need for evacuations of residents, however residents may be placed into an elevated “ready” or “set” status.

Weather: Shower and thunderstorm chances will increase slightly Saturday afternoon and decrease on Sunday afternoon. Wetting rainfall is unlikely. Temperatures will gradually increase early next week and wind speeds will increase by mid-week.

Safety: With the weekend upon us, we want to remind locals and visitors to use caution with the additional fire traffic in and around the communities of Payson, Pine, Strawberry, Tonto Village, Star Valley, and Whispering Pines.

Closure: The Tonto National Forest has issued a closure for land surrounding the West Fire. <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-publication/aztnf-2024-west-fire-tnf/us-forest-service-closure-order-for-west-fire-09-04-2024>

Smoke: Smoke from the West and Preacher Fires may be visible in the surrounding areas for many days. Smoke will be heavier in the mornings as it settles into the lower elevations and will lift as temperatures increase. As temperatures increase the volume of smoke may increase due to the drying and ignition of available fuels. Smoke-sensitive individuals and people with respiratory problems or heart disease are encouraged to take precautionary measures. Learn more about smoke impacts on the. <https://azdeq.gov/wildfire-faqs>

For the latest news and information about the Tonto National Forest, follow along on Facebook @TontoNationalForest, ‘X’ (formerly Twitter) @TontoForest or Instagram @tontonationalforest and on the Tonto National Forest website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/tonto>

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Inciweb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/aztnf-2024-west-fire-tnf> **Email:** 2024.west@firenet.gov