



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



Use caution driving as smoke settles into communities around West and Preacher fires Daily Update: September 11, 2024

West Fire - 716 Acres
Start Date: August 28, 2024
Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ
Personnel: 491

Preacher Fire - 1011 Acres
Cause: Lightning
Containment: 0%
Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Highlights/Operations: Residents noticed increased smoke from both the West and Preacher Fires yesterday due to the increase in ignitions. On the Preacher Fire, crews were able to ignite within the entire planned perimeter. They were assisted by a helicopter with ignition capabilities that added additional fire to the interior. Everything held within the planned perimeter and crews continued patrolling and mopping up the edge of the perimeter as needed throughout the night. On the West Fire, firefighters continued igniting the northeast corner of the planned area ahead of the anticipated winds. They were able to bring fire across the Rim to the top of Bray Creek and hold everything. Helicopters with water buckets assisted in keeping the fire in place on the fire's western edge. This is part of the strategy to ignite the West Fire area in sections to reduce smoke impacts to communities and improve fire benefits to the ecosystem.

Today, crews and engines will focus on holding the perimeter across the Preacher Fire. In any areas where it is needed, firefighters will secure and mop up. On the West Fire, firefighters will secure, mop up and hold the perimeter on the northeast corner. Crews are also adding protection to water lines and spring boxes above Camp Geronimo. Across the rest of the West Fire, they are improving the perimeter lines and testing structure protection watering systems. With the anticipated increased winds, there likely will not be additional ignitions today. However, fire managers will reassess throughout the day.

Weather: Winds will increase for Wednesday and Thursday out of the southwest. Expect frequent afternoon gusts to 25 mph on Wednesday and gusts up to 30-35 mph on Thursday. Wednesday will feature a sunny sky with near-normal high temperatures in the upper 70s to mid 80s. Minimum relative humidity values will range between 15 and 22 percent. Sunny again on Thursday but not quite as warm. High temperatures are forecasted to be in the mid 70s to low 80s.

Safety: Two Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) are now in place over the area, which includes uncrewed aircraft systems or drones. The public is reminded, if you fly we can't; unauthorized drone flights pose serious risks to firefighter and public safety and the effectiveness of wildfire suppression operations.

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

Evacuations: Some residents east of Payson near the Preacher Fire have been moved to SET status and Geronimo Estates residents near the West Fire have also been placed in SET status. An interactive map is available to stay up to date with evacuation levels related to both the West and Preacher Fires:

<https://nifc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=9bf2ca222ee74f8697bc670ae9c2531a>

To receive emergency notifications from Gila County go to: <https://ein.az.gov/ready-set-go>

Smoke: 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/>

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