



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



Successful ignitions on West fire, containment increase and evacuation downgrade on Preacher fire Daily Update: September 15, 2024

West Fire - 3174 Acres
Containment: 0%

Start Date: August 28, 2024

Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ

Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Preacher Fire - 3167 Acres
Containment: 53%

Cause: Lightning

Personnel: 505

Highlights/Operations: Yesterday firefighters were able to continue ignitions on the West Fire. Ignitions were successful from Bray Creek Ranch south to the Control Road. In the tops of the Webber drainages, helicopters and UAS worked with patience to slowly back fire down from the tops of the drainages, encouraging desired fire effects. For the safety of firefighters, power was turned off for part of the day around Camp Geronimo. This was done in preparation in case they needed to start ignitions around structures. Power was restored after it was determined the fire was not progressing towards the area as quickly as anticipated.

Weather is forecast to bring more moisture today and tomorrow. Higher humidity is expected to further slow fire progression. Firefighters will continually assess the conditions of the fuels to determine if they are able to continue ignitions over the next two days. They will focus on increasing the depth of burned area from the eastern perimeter, protecting Camp Geronimo and mopping up the northern perimeter.

The Preacher Fire is now 53 percent contained. Containment was added along the Diamond Point Road from Diamond Point Summer Homes to Diamond Point. There is minimal smoke as logs and stumps continue to smolder. Engines will patrol and mop up the perimeter today.

Weather: Sunday through Monday will see a high likelihood of wetting rain due moisture streaming northward from the Gulf of California associated with the remnants of Tropical Cyclone Ileana. Showers and thunderstorm are forecasted to occur, producing rain amounts of 0.1-0.2 inches over the fire area. There's a 30% probability of 0.50 inches of rain during this time.

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: Evacuation levels for the residents east of Payson near the Preacher Fire have been downgraded to READY status this morning at 9:00 am., Geronimo Estates residents near the West Fire remain 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