



# Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



## Ignitions on West Fire near completion, Preacher Fire 100% contained Daily Update: September 23, 2024

**West Fire** – 13,073 Acres  
**Containment:** 44%

**Start Date:** August 28, 2024

**Location:** Payson Ranger District, AZ

**Fuels:** Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

**Preacher Fire** – 3,167 Acres  
**Containment:** 100%

**Cause:** Lightning

**Personnel:** 484

**Highlights/Operations:** Firefighters near the end of ignition work around the southwest corner of the West Fire. After several days of mop up, the area around Camp Geronimo was considered contained.

Yesterday, aerial ignitions continued interior to the perimeter and west of the 218 road with the goal of improving some unburned islands. Elevated winds reduce aerial ignition effectiveness, but crews made progress with hand ignitions east of Pine and along the Control Road towards State Route 87. Initially plans were to hold fire along the fuels treatment block just east of the dozer line, but weather and fire behavior aligned and have allowed crews the ability to capitalize on igniting down to the dozer line, we are taking advantage of an opportunity now to create defensible space that will help keep homes, businesses and private property safer from future wildfires.

Today firefighters will continue any remaining ignitions needed from Shannon Gulch to the west and on the upper side of the thinned forest area east of Pine. Crews working on the east side of Pine and just north of the Control Road connect their fire in the southwest corner of the perimeter along the hiking trail system. Firefighters with chainsaws are also removing dead trees along the Webber Road that could be a future hazard to the public. Across the rest of the fire, engines are patrolling, extinguishing heat from the ignitions last night and backhauling equipment. As Southwest Incident Management Team 3 nears day 21, the team has begun to transition to a new fire management organization that will assume command of the fire in the coming days.

The Preacher Fire is now 100 percent contained. The area is still being patrolled to check for any remaining smoke.

**Weather:** Temperatures are predicted to be warm and dry Monday and Tuesday. Highs in the upper 70s to upper 80s both days. Minimum relative humidity levels will average 20 to 30%. Winds are light from the north and northwest.

**Safety:** A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is in place over the West fire area, which includes uncrewed aircraft systems or drones. Reminder that 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:** Pine residents on the east side of SR 87 and east of North Pine Creek Canyon road are in SET status. Geronimo Estates residents near the West Fire are 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://gilacountyaz.genasys.com/portal/en>

**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>

**Phone Number:** (928)-291-7354 (7 a-7 p)

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