



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



Hold and patrol through wind event Daily Update: September 12, 2024

West Fire - 1782 Acres
Start Date: August 28, 2024
Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ
Personnel: 481

Preacher Fire - 3161 Acres
Cause: Lightning
Containment: 0%
Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Highlights/Operations: Firefighters held the perimeter on both fires yesterday in anticipation of increased winds. On the West Fire, some ignitions were conducted on top of the Rim to encourage beneficial moderate fire intensity above Camp Geronimo and to increase the amount of area burned in the northeast corner of the perimeter. A helicopter dropped water buckets to keep the fire off the bottom of the eastern slope of West Webber Creek. This holding action was to prevent fire from running up to the top of that side of the drainage with higher intensity. A small amount of fire crossed the planned perimeter on the Rim Road, but crews quickly responded, and it is not expected to be a concern. On the Preacher Fire, crews secured and mopped up the perimeter. The interior of the fire area continued to burn. Higher winds did cause a small amount of fire to escape the planned perimeter near Wildcat Springs, but firefighters quickly built containment line around it and cooled it down with water from a helicopter. These same winds are expected to reduce smoke around Tonto Village and transport it further away from communities.

Today will be another day of firefighters holding the perimeter due to the anticipated increased winds. The need for ignitions will be continually assessed on the West Fire to moderate fire behavior and encourage slow burning of hazardous fuels, especially on the northeast corner. Across the rest of the perimeter crews and equipment are improving the existing fire lines. The structure protection group is testing watering systems that are in place. On the Preacher Fire, the ignitions are complete. Crews will continue to secure and mop up the perimeter. Engines will patrol the perimeter and stay vigilant. Residents may see a smoke column as the interior pockets of fuel continue to burn.

Weather: Winds will increase for Thursday out of the southwest. Expect frequent afternoon gusts between 25 and 35 mph, with highest along the Mogollon Rim. High temperatures on Thursday will be in the mid-70s to low 80s. Minimum relative humidity will be down around 20 percent.

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/>

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<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