IR flight provides more accurate acreage
Daily Update: September 12, 2024

West Fire - 1566 Acres
Start Date: August 28, 2024
Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ
Personnel: 459

Preacher Fire - 3167 Acres
Cause: Lightning
Containment: 0%
Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Highlights/Operations: Firefighters anticipate beginning ignitions on the West Fire again today after holding multiple days through higher winds. With the previous ignitions providing a buffer of burned area on the northern and northeast side of the planned perimeter, the focus now is on igniting from the Rim Road south through Bray Creek as well as on the east side, adding another section of fire towards the southeast to around Milk Point Flat. The ignition strategy is to have fire continue to gently back down the slopes around Camp Geronimo and carefully apply fire to protect those structures if needed. Helicopters with water buckets are available to assist crews. This ignition plan is designed to remove an unnatural build-up of potentially dangerous fuels, restore fire to the ecosystem that depends on it and fully contain the West Fire within the planned perimeter. Crews and dozers have constructed a contingency line east of Bray Creek along FR 646 road in the event it is needed. They are also finishing the removal of fuels with heavy equipment along the Control Road from Bray Creek to SR 87.

On the Preacher Fire, the small amount of fire that crossed the perimeter near Wildcat Springs was lined and mopped up yesterday. Engines continue to patrol the entire perimeter and crews are extinguishing any hotspots close to the perimeter's edge. Interior pockets of fuel continue to burn as fire moves around. At times residents will see smoke. The fire is still being staffed day and night to ensure everything is secure.

Weather: Winds will decrease a bit for Friday while remaining out of the southwest. Expect gusts between 18 and 23 mph during the afternoon, highest above 6,000 feet. High temperatures on Friday will be in the mid-70s to around 80 degrees. Minimum relative humidity will average 20 to 25 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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