



Forest Service Fire Information Update

Horton Fire Update - Payson Ranger District

December 22, 2024

Size: 769 acres

Cause: Human caused and under investigation

Containment: 0%

Total personnel: 170

Start Date: December 14, 2024

Location: Payson Ranger District, Arizona

Fuels: Ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, chapparal

Highlights: The Horton wildfire is currently 769 acres with 0% containment. There has been no western fire movement in the past 48 hours above the Highline Trail and the fire is holding along the Forest Road 300 road to Forest Road 9305. All fire activity is east of Horton Spring and in the headwaters of East Fork of Horton Creek drainage.

Operations: On Saturday, the fire progressed across the top of East Fork of Horton Creek drainage below Forest Road 76. Crews conducted firing operations along FR 300 from FR 9310 intersection to FR 76JJ to FR 76 and along FR 76 to FR 76K to keep fire from crossing FR 300 and FR 76. Crews completed prep work along Horton trail from the fire to FR 289 and started work to protect APS distribution lines along State Highway 260. Also started indirect hand line around the community of Christopher Creek to protect values at risk.

Today, firefighters will continue working along FR 300, conducting hand ignitions as needed to keep fire south of FR 300 and west of FR 76. The fire is expected to experience minimal growth in East Fork of Horton Creek drainage and onto Promontory Point. If needed, firefighters will conduct additional firing operations, burning along FR 76 to stay even with the fire edge. Crews will prep around the community of Christopher Creek, continue assessing values at risk and determining the best course of action to protect these values with the highest probability of success in the event the fire doesn't receive precipitation and continues to grow and threaten communities in the area. The East flank of the fire is currently burning in steep rugged terrain on the Mogollon Rim where ground transportation time takes longer than 4 hours to get firefighters out of the area if injured.

Weather: Long term forecasts call for dry conditions through Christmas Eve with relative humidity in the low teens, temperature range of 30s to 60s and light winds. Increased humidity and light precipitation are forecasted for middle of next week.

Closures: An emergency closure order for the Horton Fire is in effect from Dec. 18, 2024, to Jan. 31, 2025. The public is asked to avoid the fire area. The purpose of the closure order is to protect public health and safety during the Horton Fire, and to protect assigned firefighting personnel engaging in wildland firefighting operations. Please visit the Alerts and Notices page for more information.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/tonto/alerts-notice>.

The Tonto Creek Fish Hatchery is also closed due to the Horton Fire. For more information, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/azgfd>.

Safety: The communities of Tonto Creek Estates, Tonto Christian Camp, Tonto Fish Hatchery, and Zane Grey Cabins remain in SET evacuation status. The health and safety of firefighters and the public are always the priority. Members of the public are asked to avoid the fire area.

Smoke: Smoke from the Horton Fire may be visible in the surrounding areas for many days. Smoke will be heavier in the mornings as it settles into the lower elevations and will lift as temperatures increase. Smoke-sensitive individuals and people with respiratory problems or heart disease are encouraged to take precautionary measures. Learn more about smoke impacts on the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality website at <https://www.azdeq.gov/>.

Information Links and Contacts:

Tonto National Forest <https://www.fs.usda.gov/tonto>

InciWeb <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/aztnf-horton-fire-2024>

Fire Email 2024.horton@firenet.gov

Fire Information Line (602)-551-7327 • Office Hours: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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