



Forest Service Fire Information Update

Horton Fire Update - Payson Ranger District

December 23, 2024

Size: 898 acres

Cause: Human caused and under investigation

Containment: 0%

Total personnel: 181

Start Date: December 14, 2024

Location: Payson Ranger District, Arizona

Fuels: Ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, chaparral

Highlights: The Horton Fire is currently 898 acres with 0% containment. A weather shift is expected through Christmas Day, with cooler temperatures and increased humidity forecasted. No fire activity has occurred below the Highline Trail and the fire continues to hold along Forest Road (FR) 300 to FR 9305. Fire activity remains east of Horton Spring and in the headwaters of East Fork of Horton Creek drainage, area with steep, rugged terrain on the Mogollon Rim where direct engagement is not feasible and ground transportation time takes longer than 4 hours to get firefighters out of the area if injured.

Operations: Crews made great progress yesterday, successfully completing prep along the powerline corridor on the southwest portion of the fire and along FR 300 on the north end of the fire. Minimal growth was observed in East Fork of Horton Creek drainage and onto Promontory Point.

Today, crews will monitor fire activity and prep recreational infrastructure on the north end of the fire along FR 300, by removing leaf litter and downed material away from signs, restrooms, and kiosks. To the south, ground resources will complete handline around Christopher Creek and continue working along the powerline corridor.

Assessing values at risk remains a priority. Incident personnel are identifying the best course of action to protect these values with the highest probability of success if persistent, dry conditions persist. Crews will patrol the fireline, improving containment features where necessary.

Weather: The fire area will experience cooler temperatures with highs in the mid-upper 50s and increased relative humidity at 25-30%. By mid-week, temperatures will reach the mid-50s, relative humidity will increase, and winds will range from 10-20mph. Light precipitation is possible but no significant, wetting rains are expected.

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

The Tonto Creek Fish Hatchery is also closed due to the Horton Fire.

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. More information is available 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.