

FIRE INCIDENT UPDATE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Southeast Zone IMT
Chad Rice, Incident Commander
Media and Public Information: 602-540-1036

Start Date: Monday, April 28, 2025

Location: 21 miles east of Benson

Personnel Assigned: 248

Cause: Under Investigation

Acres: 2,138 acres

Containment: 54%

Stronghold Fire Update – Thursday, May 1, 2025

Summary: Despite weather and topography challenges, crews continue to make good progress on the fire. With an increase in containment on Wednesday, today, the Cochise County Sheriff's Office reduced the GO status for some residents impacted by the fire. This morning, the Sheriff's Office lifted the GO status and returned residents to SET in the areas south of Ironwood Road and west of Cochise Stronghold Road. All residents in SET have returned to READY.

For the second night in a row, the Stronghold Fire stayed within its fire footprint. Resources on a night shift reported very minimal fire activity. The night shift maintained a presence in nearby communities by patrolling and monitoring the fire's edge. An infrared flight conducted on Wednesday confirmed the acres at 2,138. The fire is now 54% contained.

Aircraft continues to support the Stronghold Fire and on Wednesday it was utilized as logistical support to sling water, food, and other supplies to crews working in the inaccessible terrain. Due to the aircraft usage, a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) was put into effect within the first few hours of the fire's start. Over the last few days, two incursions within the TFR have been reported to Air Operations. Any incursion in the airspace from aircraft or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) pose a serious threat to air and ground resources. Often times, if an incursion occurs, suppression operations can come to a halt as aircraft supporting the incident must be grounded and ground resources pulled off the fireline.

For today's operations, resources assigned to the north and east sides of the fire will continue to patrol and monitor within those areas, checking for any interior smokes or potential threats to the line in anticipation of this weekend's forecast critical fire weather. Along the east flank, hand crews previously completed and secured the hand line from Ironwood and Cochise Stronghold Roads south to Highland Road. Along the southwest side, fire activity has decreased, but it remains hung up within the Dragoons in rocky and inaccessible terrain. The southeast side within Grapevine Canyon consists of similar terrain. Hotshot and hand crews are working in those areas and will finish putting line in along the ridgelines and where it is safe to do so. They will also monitor and respond to any hotspots or rollouts. Today, resources will expand the contingency line on the south side and tie it into Middlemarch Road. Firefighters are using direct, indirect, and point protection tactics to fully suppress the fire. Engine resources remain engaged, patrolling and monitoring the fire's perimeter, and extinguishing any hot spots along the edge. The Stronghold Fire is a full suppression fire with incident objectives including firefighter and public safety, structure and infrastructure protection, and watershed and wildlife protection. Some Stronghold Fire resources will be designated as Initial Attack to any new starts that may occur in the area over the next few days.

Out of public safety, the Coronado National Forest Douglas Ranger District has implemented a Temporary Occupancy and Use Area Order due to the Stronghold Fire: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r03/coronado/alerts/stronghold-fire>

Evacuations and Closures: SET: south of Ironwood Road and West of Cochise Stronghold Road. For additional updates on evacuations, check with the Cochise County Sheriff's Office.

Weather: Hot, windy, and dry conditions remain a concern for fire operations. Weather pattern shifts this weekend could bring critical fire weather during a wind event.

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Safety: Due to aircraft use, a TFR (Temporary Flight Restriction) is in place over the fire. Firefighting aircraft and drones are a dangerous combination. Drones in the area could lead to accidents or slow down wildfire suppression operations. If you fly...we can't.

Incident Information: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/aza3s-stronghold-fire>

Twitter: @azstateforestry: <https://twitter.com/azstateforestry>

Facebook: Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management: <https://www.facebook.com/arizonaforestry>

Ready, Set, Go: <https://ein.az.gov/ready-set-go>