



Wildfire Preparations

MARCH 12, 2025

Life in the WUI

The Town of Payson sits in the North Zone (far Northern end) of the Tonto National Forest.

The Tonto National Forest is almost 2.9 million Acres (4,489 Sq Miles) covering parts of four different counties. The forest ranges from 1,300 foot elevation to 7,900 ft. Ecosystems from the Sonoran Desert to Ponderosa Pine forest.

Payson is 20 sq. miles and is completely surrounded by the Tonto National Forest.

The ponderosa pine ecosystem is a fire adapted system. Meaning that is intended to have fires.

Emergency Response



- Wildfire response is a multi-jurisdictional effort by the PFD, area fire departments, Tonto National Forest, AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management, Gila County, and our Law Enforcement partners.
- We meet annually to discuss deployment, this year's meeting is March 25th.
- We continue to discuss the situation throughout the season
- Preplanned deployment
 - 1st Alarm Package 3 engines, 2 Water Tenders and 2 Chief Officers
 - TNF deploys as well
 - Our best strategy to reduce loss is a quick response with a force large enough to control the fire

Area Resources

Rim Country has an Automatic Aid agreement between five fire departments that every day field:

- Minimum 18 Firefighters (Maximum 22)
- 8 Fire Engines
- 6 Water Tenders

The Tonto National Forest Staffs (during fire season)

- 5 Engines
- 1 Hotshot Crew (National Resource and may be deployed anywhere)
- 1 Helicopter Crew

Resources

<https://youtu.be/6j5KlhCEgpQ>



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Resources





Response

- Fire may come from outside or inside the community
 - Outside
 - Payson firefighters are trained to make aggressive initial attacks on structure fires as well as wildland fires. Our goal is to stop the fire when it is small. If the wildland fire is too large for us to stop on initial attack, we will have incident management teams dispatched to manage the long-term objectives. Large wildland fires may take days or weeks to suppress.
 - If the fire is outside the Town, Payson Fire Department will assist and supplement resources as needed by the outside incident management team.

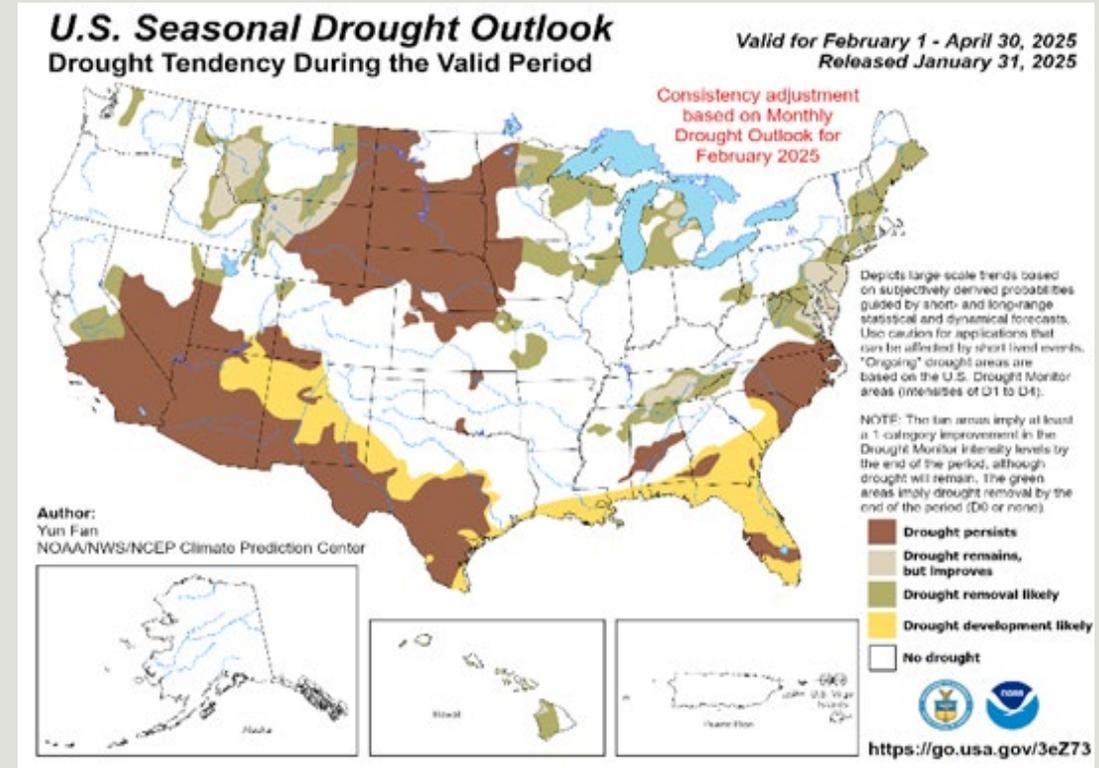
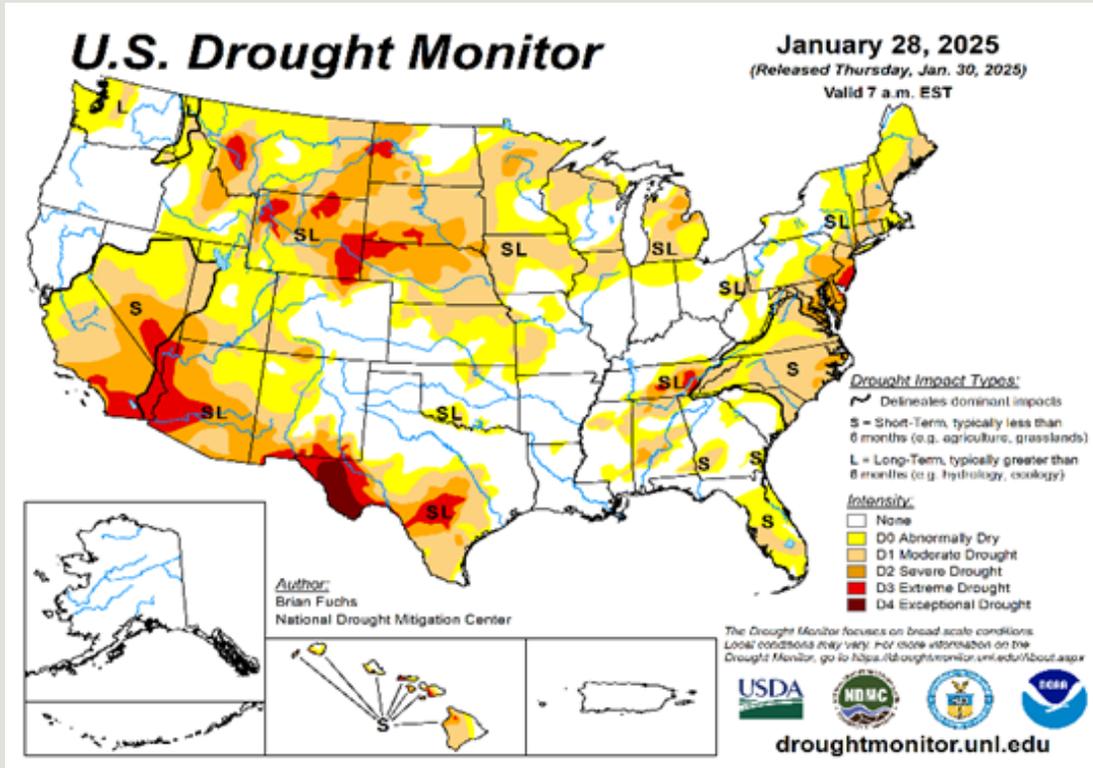


Response

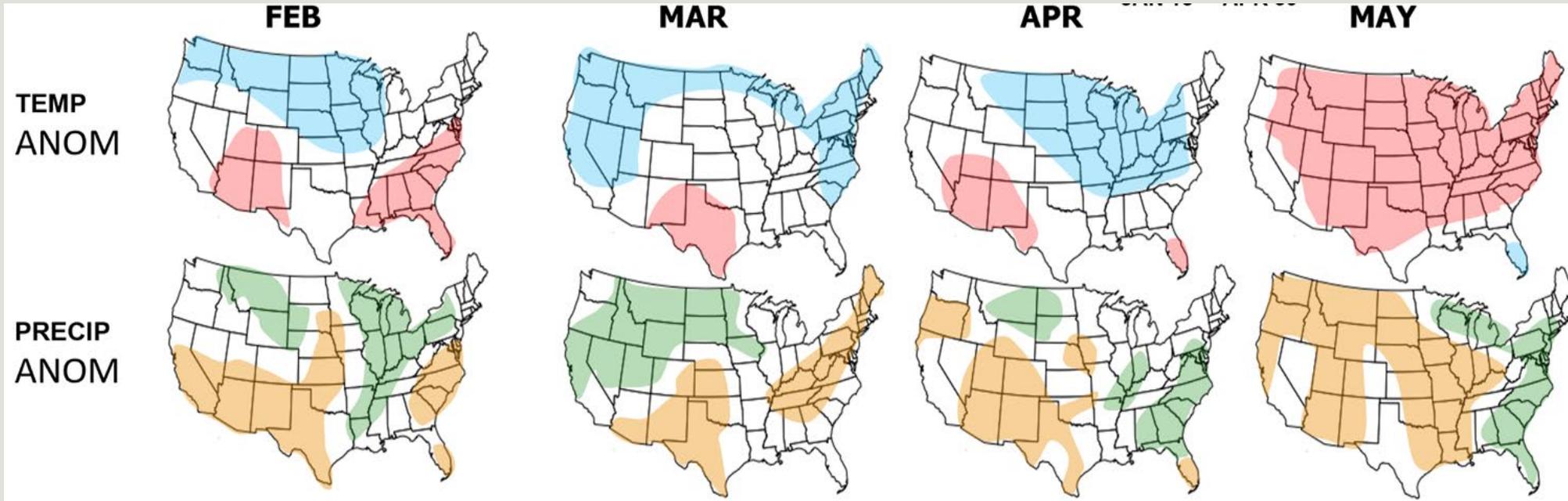
- Fire may come from outside or inside the community

Whether the fire is inside or outside the Town (as with the Bush and Poles fires) the Payson Fire Department will have a finger on the pulse and will be updating the community through social media, the radio and Everbridge.

Wildfire Outlook



Wildfire Outlook



Wildfire Outlook



2025 Fire Season Factors Summary

1. **Drought** – Significant across western AZ
2. **Fine Fuels Condition** – Above normal yields along/south of Mogollon Rim at lower elevations
3. **Seasonal Temperature & Precipitation** – Above Normal temperatures and Below Normal precipitation for Rim Country
4. **Late Winter/Spring Weather Pattern** – An overall up/down weather pattern in March and early April. Mid-April trough early June, warmer & drier than normal conditions on average and a likelier breezier/windier pattern compared to normal overall.
5. **Monsoon** – Likely on-time to at least slightly early onset and near/above normal moisture

Bottom Line: An early overall start to the large fire season. Brush and timber fires will be very active. Early/wet monsoon is possible

Emergency Notification



- Gila County EM Operates but TOP can use.
- To register visit readygila.com
 - Click “ReadyGila Alerts” on the bottom of the page.



Evacuations

Recent Drills and Evacuations

- The PD is responsible for evacuation in Arizona.
- The Payson PD exercises their evacuation plan regularly.
- Gila County and our Law Enforcement resources have conducted a number of evacuations over the last several years. Each one has been critiqued and improvements made.



Evacuations

What happens when a wildfire starts: (Assuming the start is outside of a community)

- The Fire Department and the PD meet with the Forest Service to establish trigger points.
- These trigger points are spots on the map that if the fire reaches will require decisions to be made by the Law Enforcement and the Fire Management team to make evacuation announcements.
 - First is a “SET” point
 - Next is a “GO” point, or the point we are ordering an evacuation
- At each decision point notifications are sent out via ReadyGila Alerts, and Social Media.
 - These notification will include travel route out of Town, and evacuation/check in centers to report to.
- GO notifications are accompanied by officers and volunteers going into the community spreading the word. (Note, this is time dependent)
- These decisions are not taken lightly and are for the safety of the public and firefighters.



Evacuations

- The goal is to provide time for the public to evacuate and for firefighters to move in and start preparing the community of the impacts of wildfire.
- Payson has three evacuation routes
 - 87 North
 - 87 South
 - 260 East
- The threatening fire will probably close one of these routes and that route will not be usable. Other wildfires may have these routes blocked
 - These are factors we cannot predict



Evacuations

The public's responsibility:

- Register for ReadyGila Alerts
- Prepare a plan for your family. Readygila.com is a great source of what to pack
- Plan at least two ways from your house to a major road (some neighborhoods do not have two routes, most do)
- The public should plan for at least 7 days and maybe more away from their home
 - Please take all your medication that may be necessary
 - Please do not leave animals behind (animal sheltering should be announced in the GO notice)



Evacuations

Learn and practice

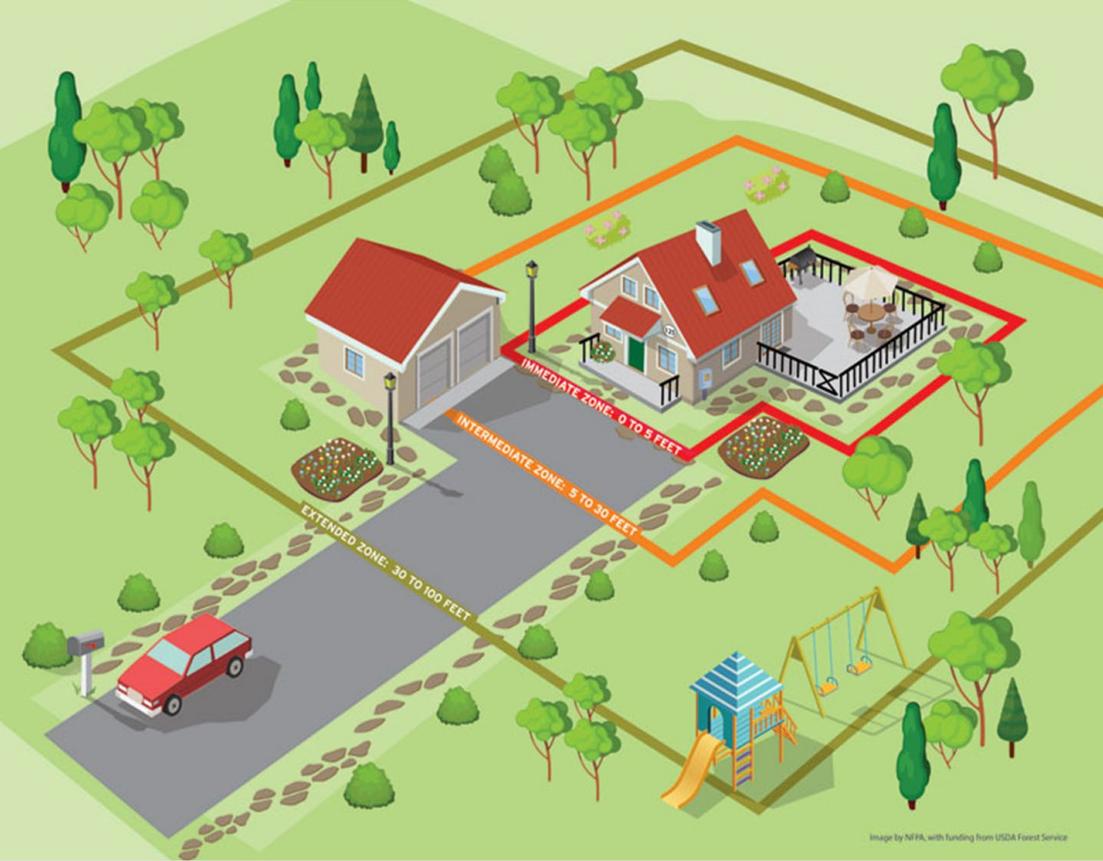
- READY
- SET
- GO



Living with Wildfire

- Make your house Fire Adapted
 - Reduce Fuels within 100 feet of your house
 - Remove branches that overhang house
 - Move firewood at least 10 feet away from House
 - Clean gutters and roof valleys
- Determine where to get accurate timely information
 - Wildfireaz.com
 - Inciweb.nwccg.gov
 - Local Social Media sites
 - <https://vimeo.com/user31924020>

Home Ignition Zone



Questions/ Feedback

