



U.S. Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, Ariz. 86001

News Release



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brady Smith, (928) 527-3490, bradysmith@fs.fed.us
George Jozens, (928) 527-3412, gjozens@fs.fed.us

www.coconinonationalforest.us
www.twitter.com/coconinonf
www.flickr.com/coconinonationalforest

On-Call PAO Line: (928) 224-8306

Joint Firefighter response to Crusher Fire near Kachina Village

Flagstaff, Ariz., July 2, 2017, For Immediate Release — A joint firefighting effort between the Highlands Fire District and the Coconino National Forest in response to a human caused wildfire less than a mile west of Kachina Village at 1:30 p.m. today.

The fire produced thick smoke which was visible for miles near Kachina Village and to travelers near Flagstaff.

The response to the Crusher Fire was several engines, a fire dozer, prevention patrols, a type II hand crew, a water tender, an initial attack aircraft and helicopter all being dispatched to a fire burning in about 1-acre of forest land.

By 3:30 p.m. today the effort of the Highlands Fire District and the USFS firefighters and were able to stop the spread of the fire at 5-acres during winds gusting to more than 30 miles per hour.

“This joint effort between the local fire crews work great,” said Chad Rice, Incident Commander (Trainee). “The transition between the original IC, Chief Dirch Foreman (Highlands Fire Department) and the Forest Service was extremely smooth. It made for an efficient operation over to Forest jurisdiction.”

Firefighting was also aided by a previous fire treatment in this stand of trees which removed fire fuels from the ground and helped today’s firefighting effort.

“This fire also ran into an area which was a previously pre-fire season treated area,’ said Chief Foreman. “Which (treated areas) make a huge difference in fighting a fire. We have great coordinated efforts with the Forest Service here.”

Forest leadership urges forest users to not have fires during Stage II restrictions.

An explanation of the different stages of fire restrictions and what is typically prohibited during those stages can be found online at www.tinyurl.com/firestagesexplained.

Although no drones were found in the area, firefighting air attack resources were kept from entering the area because of a report of an unmanned aerial vehicle was spotted in the area of operations. Whenever a drone is present firefighting aircraft must be removed from the area, for safety reasons.

With aircraft unavailable, a dozer was used to clear a line around the fire to stop its progress.

Forest Service officials continue to emphasize flying drones over or in close proximity to wildfires is illegal, endangers aviators as well as crews on the ground, and slows operations which potentially could result in the fire increasing in size.

Using a drone in a wildfire area is covered under the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 36 261.3 (a) Interfering with a Forest Officer engaged in or on account of the performance of his official duties in the protection, improvement, or administration of the National Forest System is prohibited.

Violation of the Forest fire restrictions, or the flying drones over a fire, is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, imprisonment up to six months, or both and requires a Federal Court appearance. So, be smart and just don't fly your drone anywhere near a wildfire. No amount of video or photos are worth the consequences.

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