

# American Fork, Balsinger, and Woods Creek Fires Update



Saturday, August 21, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.

**Rocky Mountain Type 1 Incident Management Team**

Dan Dallas, Incident Commander

**Information phone:** 406-426-9612

**Email:** 2021.divide@firenet.gov

**Information staffing hours:** 8:00 am – 8:00 pm

**Special Notes:** Please join us for a virtual community meeting tonight at 8pm on Facebook Live. <https://www.facebook.com/WoodsCreekBalsingerAmericanForkFires/>. Your questions are welcome.

On Sunday night at 8pm, the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Type 2 Incident Management Team will assume command of the Balsinger and Woods Creek Fires. The Albuquerque Type 3 Incident Management Team will assume command of the American Fork Fire.

**Current Situation:** Cool, wet weather continues to limit fire behavior. Firefighters are strengthening containment and contingency lines and working to add containment on the Woods Creek and American Fork fires.

## American Fork Fire

**Acreage:** 21,876 | **Containment:** 57% | **Start date:** July 17, 2021 | **Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 181

The American Fork Fire is burning in the central part of the Crazy Mountains, approximately 24 miles southwest of Harlowton, Montana. On the east side of the fire, crews in Division A are working to contain the remaining line near the Middle Fork American Fork Creek and addressing hot spots identified by infrared heat mapping. In Division P, they will continue constructing direct fire line from Buck Creek Road working east. Contingency line is complete to the north, up to the roadless area boundary. Firefighters will also improve dozer line and hand line around private property. Work continues in Division M with firefighters anchoring to the containment edge and the division break and constructing line to the northeast. The area near Lebo Fork and Blacktail Creek has seen no major fire behavior in the last several days.

## Balsinger Fire

**Acreage:** 8,614 | **Containment:** 77% | **Start date:** July 9, 2021 | **Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 74

The Balsinger Fire is in the Little Belt Mountains, approximately five miles west of Neihart, Montana. Firefighters yesterday patrolled and mopped up along containment lines, addressing any hot spots. They added depth to the line in Division I on the west side of the fire. The north edge of the fire is now labeled Division R. Work continues today in the eastern and southern parts of the fire, keeping it in the same footprint. Crews will be in the Monarch area, taking inventory of pumps and hoses. Infrared heat mapping shows very little heat on this fire.

## Woods Creek Fire

**Acreage:** 55,876 | **Containment:** 52% | **Start date:** July 10, 2021 | **Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 458

The Woods Creek Fire is burning in the Big Belt Mountains, approximately 16 miles northeast of Townsend, Montana. A hotshot crew continues direct attack in Division YY today, working east toward Division AA, improving the containment and indirect lines that have been constructed over the past several days. Firefighters added containment yesterday in Division AA, near Blacktail Creek. The hotshot crew in Division AA completed direct line from the county line to Blacktail Creek. Today, they will move to work on Division OO, putting in direct line toward the forest boundary near Big Birch Creek. On the east edge of the fire, crews continue to monitor and patrol the containment line. The fire is moving, but firefighters are staying engaged ensuring homes are protected. The UAS (firefighting drone) flew over the south edge of the fire yesterday and identified additional hot spots. On the southeast edge, crews will work near Russell Fork Deep Creek and mop up on the west side near Duck Creek Road. In Division QQ today, the focus is improving line where heat remains near the perimeter. Crews in Division SS will continue skidding logs and chipping brush from the indirect line. A hotshot crew will work to add containment near Horse Creek in Division YY, tying into North Fork Duck Creek.

**Weather and Fuel Conditions:** Cool weather persists today, with clouds increasing through the morning hours and a 60% chance of rain. Multiple bands of scattered showers and thunderstorms are predicted this afternoon and into the evening. The high temperature today will be 54°F at 7500 feet elevation. Winds are changing direction, coming from the south to southeast, with gusts up to 30 mph at the ridgetops. Tomorrow, expect to see fewer clouds and warmer temperatures with the

chance of rain just 10%. Fire behavior is currently moderated by the wet fuels and weather conditions. Long-term fire modeling shows a low probability of major fire spread.

### Evacuation Notices

The interactive web map depicts evacuation areas. Please see <https://bit.ly/WoodsCreekBalsingerAmericanForkFires> or contact your local county sheriff's office for details.

**American Fork Fire:** The Park County Sheriff's Office has Shields River Road in pre-evacuation status. Meagher County has done the same with the Smith Creek area. County roads in the area are open. However, there are still closures in the National Forests.

**Balsinger Fire:** The Cascade County Sheriff's Office has issued pre-evacuation orders for Belt Park, the area from the Belt Creek Ranger Station to Monarch, and from west of Monarch to the confluence of Pilgrim Creek and Belt Creek.

**Woods Creek Fire:** Effective August 20, the Broadwater County Sheriff's Office lifted all evacuation and pre-evacuation orders and warnings are for all areas of the Woods Creek Fire on the Broadwater County side.

Effective August 18, the Meagher County Sheriff's Office has lifted the pre-evacuation for the area east of Camas Creek Road and north of North Fork Woods Gulch Creek to Luppold Road. On the east side of the fire, the area south of Burt Ranch Road and west of Camas Creek Road has been moved from mandatory to pre-evacuation status. A pre-evacuation notice remains in place for residents on Birky Road and Ramspeck Lane and for Grassy Mountain residents.

### Closures and Advisories

Areas around the fires are closed for public safety. Please respect the closure signs.

Temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) remain in place on the Woods Creek and American Fork fire areas. TFR violations can disrupt aerial firefighting operations and may force fire managers to ground essential aircraft. Wildfires are a no-fly zone for unauthorized aircraft, including drones. **If you fly, we can't.** <http://knowbeforeyoufly.org>

Most of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest is in Stage 2 fire restrictions. There are also closure areas for the Balsinger and Woods Creek fires. See: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/hlcnf/alerts-notice>

Stage 1 fire restrictions remain in place for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. There is also a closure area for the American Fork fire. See: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/custergallatin/alerts-notice>

The Bureau of Land Management Butte and Lewiston Field Offices issued an area closure for lands affected by the Woods Creek Fire. See: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/article/7649/63667/>

#### For more information:

Information Phone: 406-426-9612

Facebook: <https://bit.ly/2XiK1Et>

Email: [2021.divide@firenet.gov](mailto:2021.divide@firenet.gov)

Web map: <https://bit.ly/WoodsCreekBalsingerAmericanForkFires>

American Fork InciWeb: [inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7681](https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7681)

Balsinger InciWeb: [inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7624](https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7624)

Woods Creek InciWeb: [inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7649](https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7649)

Smoke information: <https://fire.airnow.gov/#>

Statewide fire restrictions: [www.MTFireInfo.org](http://www.MTFireInfo.org)

