

# American Fork, Balsinger, and Woods Creek Fires Update



Monday, August 23, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.

## Albuquerque Zone Type 3 Incident Management Team

Zach Saavedra, Incident Commander – American Fork Fire

## Fire Department City of New York Type 2 Incident Management Team

Richard DePrima, Incident Commander – Balsinger and Woods Creek Fires

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

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

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

**Special Notes:** The interactive web map of the three fires is now disabled. Please see the maps of each fire attached to these daily updates or on the Facebook or InciWeb sites.

**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. Suppression repair and backhauling continue, mitigating damage to natural and cultural resources and preparing equipment for its next use.

### American Fork Fire

**Location:** 24 miles SW of Harlowtown, MT | **Acreage:** 21,876 | **Containment:** 58% | **Start date:** July 17, 2021

**Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 132

The American Fork fire was transitioned to the Albuquerque Zone - Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) on August 22. The Albuquerque Zone - Type 3 team arrived at the incident on August 21 and received a thorough in-briefing from the outgoing Incident Management Team - Type 1 and the incoming Fire Department City of New York (FDNY) - Type 2 IMT. The FDNY team will continue to manage the Woods Creek and Balsinger fires. The Albuquerque Zone - Type 3 Operations Branch Section Chief, Marc Wheeler, in collaboration with the Incident Commander and outgoing team, prioritized resources and manageable span of control. This was done to downsize the organization to meet all operational needs and optimal effectiveness to carry forward the mission of full suppression.

### Balsinger Fire

**Location:** 5 miles W of Neihart, MT | **Acreage:** 8,584 | **Containment:** 77% | **Start date:** July 9, 2021

**Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 69

Firefighters yesterday patrolled and mopped up along containment lines, addressing any hot spots. Today they will continue adding depth to the containment lines in Divisions I and T, focusing on hot spots from the infrared mapping and ensuring resources are in place near structures. Fire officials are analyzing management options for the north edge of the fire in Division R. There is very little heat and no fire growth in that division.

### Woods Creek Fire

**Location:** 16 miles NE of Townsend, MT | **Acreage:** 55,882 | **Containment:** 54% | **Start date:** July 10, 2021

**Cause:** Lightning | **Personnel:** 562

Firefighters added containment yesterday on the north edge of the fire. Two crews continue to mop up and strengthen line in Divisions Y and A, working toward full containment. Most of the eastern edge of the fire, in Divisions A and O, is in patrol status. Control line is in place, but some heat remains in the drainage near Big Birch Creek. Firefighters will continue direct attack in the area today. On the southeast edge near Butte Creek, a hotshot crew continues to engage a small spot fire. An infrared flight showed no hot spots in Division Q and just a few in Division S. Crews in Division S are patrolling and mopping up along contingency lines and working to complete containment near Horse Creek. The contingency lines in Divisions Q and S have Management Action Points. If the fire reaches these points, firefighters have alternative tactical plans in place. The terrain prevents firefighters from safely engaging in direct attack in these areas. Mastication and chipping operations concluded yesterday on the east side of the fire, with minor clean up continuing today. Resource Advisors are working with fire officials and local land managers to complete a comprehensive suppression repair plan.

**Weather and Fuel Conditions:** Today will be windy and cool, with a 15% chance of rain. A cold front is coming in this afternoon, bringing gusty winds up to 40 mph. The high temperature today will be 61°F at 7500 feet elevation. Westerly ridgetop winds will be 20 mph sustained. Fire behavior is currently moderated by wet fuels and weather conditions.

## Evacuation Notices

For questions or more information on evacuations, please contact your local county sheriff's office.

**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. There are 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:** The Broadwater County Sheriff's Office has lifted all evacuation and pre-evacuation orders and warnings for all areas of the Woods Creek Fire on the Broadwater County side. 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 is in pre-evacuation status. A pre-evacuation notice remains 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-notices>

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-notices>

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)

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/#> or

<https://svc.mt.gov/deq/todaysair/smokemostrecentupdate.aspx>

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

