

# Balsinger, Woods Creek, and American Fork Fires Update



Thursday, August 26, 2021 – 10:00 am

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

Richard DePrima, Incident Commander – Balsinger and Woods Creek Fires

## **Albuquerque Zone Type 3 Incident Management Team**

Zach Saavedra, Incident Commander – American Fork Fire

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

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

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

**Special Notes:** A Virtual Community Meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Thursday August 26<sup>th</sup> on Facebook Live: <https://www.facebook.com/WoodsCreekBalsingerAmericanForkFires>. Incident personnel will also be at the White Sulphur Springs Farmers Market this evening (Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup>), to provide fire information and answer questions from 5:00-7:00pm.

**Current Situation:** Work continues today on strengthening containment and contingency lines and mopping up hot spots. Four helicopters remain assigned to the fires to assist with dropping buckets of water to cool areas of heat. Suppression repair work will begin on the Woods Creek Fire.

### **Balsinger Fire**

**Location:** 5 miles W of Neihart, MT | **Acres:** 8,584 | **Containment:** 77% | **Start date:** July 9, 2021 | **Personnel:** 57

Firefighters and engines continue to patrol and mop-up along containment lines. There are no notable hot spots at this time and smoldering among the heavier fuels within the fire perimeter is likely. Today, Crews will continue mop up and patrol in Divisions I and T. Division R remains unstaffed. Steep, inaccessible terrain and heavy fuels in Division R make direct attack along the north edge unsafe for firefighters. There is very little heat and no fire growth in that division. Fire officials have identified Management Action Points. In the unlikely event the fire reaches these points, alternative tactics will be implemented.

### **Woods Creek Fire**

**Location:** 16 miles NE of Townsend, MT | **Acres:** 55,411 | **Containment:** 61% | **Start date:** July 10, 2021 | **Personnel:** 387

Creeping and backing on the fire may occur today, and smokes are likely to show in the interior of the fire. The potential for spotting remains low. Crews are continuing to patrol the fire perimeter in Divisions Y and A. In Division A, suppression repair continues today. The eastern edge of the fire, in Divisions A and O, is in patrol and mop-up status, except for a small “finger” near Big Birch Creek. Control line is in place, and crews continue to work towards containment in this area of the fire. At the southeast edge, a hotshot crew is working near Russell Fork Deep Creek to contain a hot spot burning in snags and timber. Crews in both Division Q and Division S are working to complete chipping and mastication on the contingency line in those divisions. In Division S, crews are patrolling, mopping up, and strengthening contingency lines and continue to monitor hot spots in the North Fork of Duck Creek. Interior smokes are visible in this division, but there is minimal heat near the fire perimeter. Interior fuels may continue to burn until there is a season-ending event.

### **American Fork Fire**

**Location:** 24 miles SW of Harlowtown, MT | **Acres:** 21,876 | **Containment:** 64% | **Start date:** July 17, 2021 | **Personnel:** 201

The American Fork fire is under the command of the Albuquerque Zone Type 3 Incident Management Team.

Yesterday, fire crews completed line construction between Divisions A and Z and have now achieved containment in both divisions in the southern portion of the fire. Crews from the Montana National Guard removed no longer needed equipment and supplies. 38,000 feet of hose was gathered up to be re-rolled and returned to the cache for later use. Some smoldering stump holes were identified and extinguished in Division F on the north part of the fire. More containment was gained in Divisions F and K as crews continued to work east along the fire perimeter to tie in with the Blacktail Fire scar. Today, professional fallers will continue to remove dangerous snags and fire-weakened trees that pose a safety hazard to firefighters, especially on the north part of the fire in Division F. Crews will patrol the fire perimeter and locate and extinguish any residual heat. Around the fire, crews will identify and work at repairing lands disturbed by construction of hand and dozer lines.

**Weather and Fuel Conditions:** Cloudy, breezy and cooler conditions are expected today, as an unsettled weather pattern continues. There is the chance for showers and thunderstorms to develop by early afternoon and continue until 8:00pm. More widespread showers and thunderstorm activity is expected Friday.

### 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.

**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. Traffic on closed roads creates safety hazards for firefighters and emergency vehicles.

Temporary flight restrictions remain in place over the American Fork Fire area. 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. For details see: <https://go.usa.gov/xFMGd>. There are closure areas for the Balsinger Fire (<https://go.usa.gov/xFMGk>) Woods Creek Fire (<https://go.usa.gov/xFMG5>) and American Fork Fire (<https://go.usa.gov/xFMGy>).

Stage 1 fire restrictions remain in place for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. For more information, see the first item in the Alerts section at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/custergallatin/alerts-notice>. There is an updated closure area for the American Fork Fire as of August 24<sup>th</sup>. See: <https://go.usa.gov/xFMGf>.

The Bureau of Land Management Butte and Lewiston Field Offices issued an area closure for lands affected by the Woods Creek Fire. See: <https://go.usa.gov/xFMGG>.

#### 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)

