

Balsinger, Woods Creek, and American Fork Fires Update



Friday August 27, 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: If you missed last night's virtual meeting, it can be found at [Facebook Live Community Meeting](#).

Forest Service Order Number 01-15-07-21-32 issued on August 26th, is in effect for the Balsinger Fire area of the Divide Complex Fire. For details see [Order 01-15-07-21-32](#).

Effective today, Fire Updates will be released on Monday, Wednesday and Friday only. Daily Updates will no longer be issued.

Current Situation: Work continues today on strengthening containment and contingency lines and mopping up hot spots. Cooperating agencies have approved suppression repair plans and crews will repair hand line and dozer line to mitigate impacts to natural and cultural resources. Control lines that are still needed to prevent fire spread will remain in place until fire season has ended. Other repair activities include pulling back berms and installing water bars to prevent soil erosion and water run-off.

Balsinger Fire

Location: 5 miles W of Neihart, MT | **Acres:** 8,584 | **Containment:** 77% | **Start date:** July 9, 2021 | **Personnel:** 51
Firefighters and engines continue to patrol and mop-up along containment lines. Equipment is being back-hauled, including hose lays and pumps. Fire suppression repair will also begin today. Smoldering among the heavier fuels within the fire perimeter is possible. 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 has been no fire growth. 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:** 433
Minimal fire activity is expected again today. Smoldering and creeping may occur. Crews are continuing to patrol the fire perimeter in Divisions Y and A. Suppression repair continues again today those divisions. Division O remains in a patrol and mop-up status, with little activity on the 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. Crews in both Division Q and Division S are working to complete chipping and mastication on the contingency line in those divisions. Division Q and Division S are preparing for suppression repair in those divisions. In Division S, crews are also in patrol and mop-up status. They continue to monitor for hot spots in the North Fork of Duck Creek. Interior smokes may be 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:** 21,892 | **Containment:** 68% | **Start date:** July 17, 2021 | **Personnel:** 180
The American Fork fire is under the command of the Albuquerque Zone Type 3 Incident Management Team. Over the next twenty-four to seventy-two hours significant changes can be expected on the American Fork Fire. The spike camp located at Melville was dismantled with all resources and supplies transferred to the Shields Valley Ranch (SVR) spike. The SVR spike is scheduled for demobilization and removal on Saturday August 28. The Albuquerque IMT last working day is Sunday, August 29th at which time the incident will be turned over the local unit.

On August 24 the scheduled Infrared (IR) flight detected no significant heat, and the August 26 flight identified minimal heat north of Lebo Peak. Resources on Division F did find a few isolated heat sources too small to be identified by the IR, although these were of no concern and were not impacting the line. Crews continue to do repair work on Division F as well as reinforce line near the Lodgepole Trailhead.

The Montana National Guard crews removed the protective wrap on the Porcupine Cabin on Division A in addition to assisting with the inventory and preparation of supplies for return to the fire cache to be distributed to other fires. Division K was assessed by the Division Chief and their trainee for possible means of increasing containment on the Northeast portion of the line. In Division Z, crews focused on repairs so that local landowners could use pastureland.

Weather and Fuel Conditions: A strong disturbance and cold front will cross the region today and bring widespread shower and thunderstorm activity throughout the daytime period. Chilly temperatures are expected late Friday night and Saturday morning.

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-notices>. There is an updated closure area for the American Fork Fire as of August 24th. 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

American Fork InciWeb: inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7681

Balsinger InciWeb: inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7624

Woods Creek InciWeb: 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

