

41 Complex Fire Update – September 7, 2011

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPDATE: September 7, 2011 10:45 a.m.

FIRE NAME: 41 Complex

DATE OF DETECTION: August 28, 2011, 10:00 p.m. **CAUSE:** Lightning

CURRENT SIZE: 3,700 acres. Up Top fire (3,627 acres) 41 fire (105 acres)

CONTAINMENT: Up Top fire (0% contained) 41 fire (95% contained)

LOCATION: Sapphire Mountains 10 miles east of Hamilton – Darby Ranger District

AGENCY: Bitterroot National Forest

YESTERDAY’S ACTIVITY: The fires grew by more than 900 acres yesterday pushed again by hot and dry conditions and breezy winds. The Up Top fire burning 13 miles east of Hamilton near Skalkaho Highway saw increased burning and fire activity, especially late in the day as temperatures reached near 90 degrees. Crews continued to make good progress on the 41 fire, continuing to mop-up and strengthen fireline and monitor for hotspots. Crews also patrolled Skalkaho Highway and scouted for spot fires and possible control line opportunities, before two rockslides cut off access to the pass. Coyote Meadows (841 acres) and Fox Peak (249 acres) fires burning southeast of the 41 Complex also grew yesterday. They are burning south of Signal Rock approximately 25 miles northeast of Darby.

TODAY’S WEATHER AND PLANNED ACTIVITY: Firefighting resources will work to keep the fires east and away from private land. Crews will continue mop-up on the 41 fire and will also construct additional fireline from Gird Creek east to tie in with a previous burn. Helicopters will continue to aid the firefighting efforts with water drops to cool hot spots where it can be safely and effectively done. Crews will also be assessing transportation options along Skalkaho Highway due to numerous rockslides. Today’s weather calls for more hot and dry conditions with increased fire behavior potential. Higher temperatures and low humidity are expected for the next several days.

PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES ON THE FIRE: 4 20-person crews, 2 helicopters, 5 engines, 1 water tender, and a total of 200 people.

SPECIAL CONCERNS: The fire is burning in steep, rugged terrain. Access is limited. Hazard trees and snags pose a threat to firefighters. Burning and rolling debris falling onto Skalkaho Highway which is currently blocked by numerous rockslides.

CLOSURES: Montana Transportation Department has closed Skalkaho Pass from mile post 14 to mile post 30. Gird Road #714 and Skalkaho Rye Road #75 are closed to provide for public and firefighter safety.

SPECIAL MESSAGES: Due to an inversion, smoke will hang in the Valley during the morning hours. Today’s air quality is listed as Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups – people with respiratory or heart disease, the elderly and children should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion. Contact: County Public Health @ 375-6675.

The Poncin Northern Region Type I Incident Management Team will assume management of the 41 Complex fires at 6:00am tomorrow. They will manage the fires in cooperation with the Bitterroot National Forest and Hamilton Fire Department. A fire information trailer with the latest maps and closure information will be open each day from noon to 8pm at Canyon View Church at 195 Skalkaho Highway.

For more information including fire maps and photos visit www.inciweb.org/incident/2544

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