



New Zealand, Australia Contingent to USA 2015 "WE WORK AS ONE"

Update # 2
26 August 2015

Wednesday 26th, the team has now been issued with their PPE plus radios and completed their training introduction to fire management within the USA.

The Kiwis are not so happy to be wearing green and gold, with many looking to find some dirt to roll in to disguise the fact. But it is good to see everyone form as one team.



Photo: New Zealand team in their USA PPE.

Deployments of the fires that the team are going to be working on has been confirmed as follows (please also refer to the attached maps):

Boise National Interagency Fire Centre (NIFC)

- Tim Mitchell - NZ Liaison

Washington North West Area

Okanogan Complex (5 separate fires)

State Fire Authority fire located 11 miles northwest of Omak 258,339 acres burnt, fire is burning in timber fuels, numerous structures are threatened, fire cost to date 10.2m.

- Philip MacDonald - Helicopter Manager
- Ashton Oliver - Taskforce/Strike Team Leader
- Kerry O'Neil - Taskforce/Strike Team Leader
- John Rasmussen - Taskforce/Strike Team Leader
- Kevin Ihaka - Division Group Supervisor

Chelan Complex (5 separate fires)

Bureau of Land Management (Fire Authority) fire located one mile south of Chelan 88,104 acres burnt fire is burning in timber and grass fuels, numerous structures are threatened, fire cost to date 6m.

- Scott Marchant - Helicopter Manager
- Malcolm Smith - Helicopter Manager
- Johnathan Lane - Strike Team Leader
- Steven Ochsner - Division Group Supervisor

North Star

Bureau of Indian Affairs (Fire Authority) fire located 24 miles east of Omak 150,000 acres burnt, fire is burning in timber and logging slash fuels, numerous structures threatened and evacuations in effect, fire cost to date 4m.

- Ian Reade - Division Group Supervisor
- Rick Sloman - Division Group Supervisor

Oregon Area

Eagle Fire

State Fire Authority fire located 20 miles northwest of Richland 8,129 acres burnt, fire is burning in timber and logging slash, this is the most active fire with fire runs and long range spotting occurring. Structures threatened and evacuations in effect, fire cost to date 3.9m.

- Paul Devlin - Helicopter Manager

Grizzly Bear Complex (8 separate fires)

State Fire Authority fire located 20 miles southeast of Dayton 59,200 acres burnt, fire is burning in timber and grass fuels, numerous structures threatened, fire cost to date 3.3m.

- Bruce Janes - Helicopter Manager
- Warren Heslip - Taskforce/Strike Team Leader

The team has done well to adjust to the new time zone and change in temperature although sleep patterns are still taking some time to get right.

The Kiwi/Australian deployment has been very popular with a number of people (not just the media) wanting to meet and talk to them. Yesterday the Idaho Governor Butch Otter dropped in briefly to talk to the team. Butch is a real character complete with cowboy boots, hat and substantial belt buckle.

Everyone is in good health (except for one Australian who has taken ill today) and looking forward to getting on the incident ground.

With their induction training complete the team has just boarded a flight from Boise to Redmond (1730 hrs) from where they will be deployed onto the various incident grounds listed in the coming days.

The plan for the next few days

Thursday 27th: the Aircraft Managers will be given a further day's training around aircraft operations at Redmond while everyone else will drive out to the fires they are assigned.

Friday 28th: the Aircraft Managers will drive out to the fires they are assigned, while everyone else will start their first day on their fires.

Saturday 29th: Aircraft Managers start their first day on the fires they are assigned.

Current status

Currently the temperature in Boise is 37 degrees. A weather change is expected to bring cooler temperatures over the next couple of days with rain forecast for most areas over the weekend. Dry lightning is expected to be a problem with the change along frontal wind gusts.

Crews have made good progress on a number of fires, although there were 113 new fire starts yesterday and 77 large uncontained fires remain. So far this fire season in the USA there have been 42,890 fires burning an area of 7,602,256 acres and counting.

Useful links

We've set up a Facebook site for friends and family to access photos plus regular updates on what is happening, the site is called "USA Wildfires 2015 – Australia/NZ Deployment". It's a closed site, so you'll need to register to join.

Another useful site giving up-to-date USA Situation reports is:

<https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/index.htm> (click on the situation report tab left side menu).

For more detailed information about the fires in the Northwest where the Kiwi crews are deployed: <http://gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc/>

You may also find the Friends and Family webpage useful we have setup this page for those who don't have access to facebook <http://files.portal.em.vic.gov.au/refdocs/SCC-IILU.htm?v=3>

I'll send more news soon to keep you all up-to-date.

Cheers,

Tim

(On behalf of the Kiwi team)