



New Zealand IMT Contingent to Canada 2015
Alberta Wildfire Management Area
High Level
Update # 5
7 August 2015

Seventeen rural fire experts from across New Zealand based in Alberta Canada helping to combat the extreme wildfire situation happening here.

Greetings to you all.

R & R Photo's



*This is "Lake Maligne" in Jasper National Park Alberta. A very spectacular lake with lots of history.
www.malignelake.com*



The scouting party looking for hand me downs!!



An Elk in Jasper National Park.



Squirrel

Where we're based

The bulk of the team as you are aware are in their new Base Camp at "Worsely" North East of Peace River. The camp is quite a bit smaller than Birch was, but still with the same makeup and quality of services.

I mentioned in the last update that one of the NZ Division Supervisors who is working with 20 Mexican firefighters on the BC boarder fire was staying in a small township, this was incorrect. They were in fact staying in an oil camp which was known as “Shell Hamburg”. This camp had all the same quality and services as the others, and because they were so far from the Worsely Base they also had a Medic on site.

Because of the rainfall in the “Shell Hamburg” region within the last few days it was decided to change the location of this crew because they could not get out onto the fire they had been tasked to.

(The timing was quite appropriate by all accounts, as the morning they were leaving a wolf and a bear were seen within the camp. The camp Wildlife Ranger was able to convince the bear it was not a place for it to be, and he was last seen heading for the hills).

They have now moved over to help in the Notikewin Complex on fire 131, but are not staying with the rest of the team because the Camp at Worsely is too small. They are staying in a camp approximately 64 kilometres due north of the fire called the “Chinchaga Primary Fire Base”.

They are daily tasking with the rest of the Taskforce now.

Travel



Not sure if supply had anything to do with this load of grave! But I am sure a remedy was Quick at hand from those on board. They were heading to Peace River when someone said they wanted a photo. They got one, but I do not think this is what they meant!!

The Teams



The Briefing sessions have been going well in the mornings and any translation problems are being undertaken by a number of the Mexican Crew Leaders who speak both English and Spanish.





The Environment & Tasking

The Teams have had a fairly quiet time on the actual fire front since they have been at the Notikewin and Hamburg Complex's. The weather has been a bit overcast on most days with low cloud cover some mornings and later on in the day. This has restricted flying capability due to the visibility factors and has also impacted on the environment and associated safety factors. If there is any drought and the safety thresholds have been met then they have to bring the crews back to camp, or stand them down until the event has passed.



You need to have a Communications Management Team when dealing with so many Aircraft and Machinery as in the "Notikewin Complex" .

As mentioned the aircraft are the main mode of transport within the fire ground, but they are also using their trucks and allocated busses also, due to the amount of roading in the region for fires 129 & 131.

The nature of the conditions in the field at present requires the assistance of all-terrain vehicles that can cope with the landscape.

Two of these vehicles are currently being used on these fires and they are the “Nodwell” and the “Hagland”



Nodwell



Hagland

These vehicles are used with water tanks and fire suppression capability and carrying general equipment. They are also used as personnel transporters.

The PWF 129 Fire is in the process of undergoing reclamation, (NZ rehabilitation). A very comprehensive plan has been drawn up by the Planning Team that shows how the damage that has been bestowed on the environment is going to be returned to as natural a landscape as before. The team were just waiting on the signed off paperwork to arrive so this operation could be undertaken.

The picture below is one example where this stream has had a crossing put in for access to the fire ground, this will be realigned to as natural a course as it was previously. The Bulldozer or Digger Berms/Dozer Guards that are running along the side of the tracks are also spread back over the tracks so the grasses can become re-established. This also includes the Helicopter Pads and dug out pumping stations.

If these areas are left as they are it makes it easy access for the hunters during the hunting season and takes away the sportsmanship quality that the Region is renowned for. It would make it more accessible for quad bikes and the like, for which the Wildlife Department are against.





One of the Teams receiving a visit from the safety officer on the job. I am told that she was undergoing Spanish lessons. (A copy from one of the morning Safety Briefing papers is attached also)

The PWF 131 Fire is in a similar state as 129 and the reclamation plan is being drawn up for this also. Machinery is being used to open up around the stockpiles of pulp chip for the suppression effort.

There are still a large number of fires within this region being worked on and the teams are slowly dealing with them as weather and the environment allow.

All the Teams are knuckling down and getting on with the tasks at hand.

The FLIR!



Part of the fire landscape at "Notikewin" and checking for hotspots with the FLIR Camera.

After the fire has been through an area there is a need to check that the fire has been extinguished and to do this they need a piece of special apparatus called a FLIR Camera, (Forward Looking Infrared Camera). This machine works under Ultraviolet Light and picks up heat from the fires, which can be on or under the ground, in hollow trees or slash piles. The best time of day to undertake this operation is at first light in the morning and last thing at night when the fire ground is usually cooler. The area is marked with a GPS Way Point for reference and this is then relayed to the crews who are working in the area to check it out. It saves a lot of ground work when you have limited resources. This practice is also used in NZ.



2 Whitetail deer



Bison on the wrong side of the road, who's going to challenge him!

Team Travel

Yes we are getting close to that time, and a plan has been put in place for getting the Team home.

- The last day on the line will be the 12th August.
- A bus will be sent to pick the team up from the “Worsely Camp” on the morning of the 13th and taken down to Peace River for the local debrief.
- From there they will be taken back to Edmonton to their accommodation at the Executive Royal Hotel which is close to the airport.
- 14th Breakfast and out to the Fire Depot Warehouse to hand in the allocated kit bag that everyone was issued, and have a look over the operation.
- Then it is back to the accommodation for the Provincial Forest Fire Centre (PFFC) Debrief.
- Dinner will follow at the hotel.
- 15th Is departure day and the flights have been booked through the PFFC Office and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC).

- **Air Canada Flight 245Y 15AUG Edmonton to Vancouver 1550P 1627P**

- **Air New Zealand Flight 23Y 15AUG Vancouver to Auckland 2000P 0500A**

Team flights within NZ are being sorted on Monday, and your family members will be advised of this when available.

More info

If you need to contact any of the team for any reason while they’re on deployment, get in touch with National Rural Fire Authority’s Abi Davidson in the first instance:

- DDI: (04) 496 3688
- Mobile: (021) 985 217
- Email: abi.davidson@fire.org.nz.

Please be aware that the team are in a very remote part of Canada and contact or communication with the outside world may not be possible at times.

Plus check out our NRFA Facebook page for more news and photos along the way.

The team are all well and looking forward to heading home.



Cheers,
Russell Barclay - NZ Liaison