



Name of Deployment (update 04)

News and information for families

17 February 2016

Welcome

The following update has been provided by Nigel Dravitzki who is the New Zealand Liaison for the National Rural Fire Authority during this deployment to Tasmania.

Arrivals and departures

Much of the past few days has been about organising the arrival of two taskforces (Delta and Charlie) to Australia, and the departure of two taskforces (Alpha and Bravo) back to New Zealand.

This appears to have gone seamlessly (see arriving photos later in this newsletter) with everyone either happy to be here, or pleased to be returning home to loved ones.

- **Sunday, 14 February:** Charlie and Delta arrived safely. Taskforce Charlie will be located in the North West, while Delta will be located in the South.
- **Monday, 15 February:** Taskforces received briefings for Tasmanian and New Zealand officials.
- **Tuesday, 16 February:** Both taskforces left early to check into the Arthur river complex and Strathgordon (where the previous deployment had been based).

Hearty salutations of respect and gratitude

Below is an email that was sent to one of the first deployment team members just before they left to return home.

While this email refers to the crew Andrew Skelly worked with, we are continually getting similar feedback about our teams efforts. Great stuff!

Safe travels to you all on your way home.

Please pass on hearty salutations of respect and gratitude to all in the NZ taskforce especially the Skelly crew of Nobby, Nathan, Steve, Dean and Patrik. The work ethic, positive attitudes, leadership and friendship of the whole taskforce showcases the best of the Kiwi spirit (and explain why Australia can't win rugby against the all blacks).

I am honoured and privileged to have had the opportunity to work with the NZ taskforce in the wilderness of a small island off the west coast of New Zealand.

Regards

Andrew Skelly

Senior Station Officer

Tasmania Fire Service

Day 36

Day 36 (Wednesday, 17 February) of the Tasmanian deployment, and it's beginning to feel a bit like 'ground hog day' with the ongoing routine of briefing, travel, fight-fires, travel, eat, sleep, and repeat.

While our crews have been working hard at the fire front, we've also got a number of operational staff located at the State Fire Operations Centre (SFOC) and at the three Regional Incident Management centres. These operational personnel are critical to the logistic management of resources and the coordination of firefighting efforts.

A number of other states from across Australia have committed to assisting the Tasmanian Fire Authorities call for help, with the following additional firefighting personnel deployed to Tasmania (as at 16 Feb): 116 Victoria, 171 New South Wales, 18 Queensland, 68 South Australia.

Situation Overview - as at 1030 hours, Tuesday 16 February 2016

- To date, 124,206 hectares of land has been burnt. This reflects the fact that the fires have grown in size.
- Several fires remain unmapped. The current fires have an approximate perimeter of 937.2 km.
- Hot spots remain for the majority of fires.
- Access is difficult; and majority of response involves aerial insertion, hand tools, soft containment, and blacking out where possible.
- 78 fires remain active

- 28 are currently 'going', 'uncontained' and/or 'uncontrolled' (note: these are switching between status periodically);
- 50 are 'in patrol'. There are currently no 'emergency warnings' or 'watch and act' alerts;
- Six 'advice' messages are currently in force (Lake Mackenzie x2, South West, and Mawbanna x3); however, the spread of the fire will determine future alerts and this is capable of changing rapidly.

Wuthering Heights Road.

- No significant change.
- Ground crews and heavy plant equipment (with air support) continue to consolidate existing control lines, provide intelligence on road conditions and mop up as required.
- The uncontained burnt edge around the breakout remains a point of focus due to the dominant button-grass vegetation and the moderate to strong SW winds, which are putting pressure on eastern containment lines.
- Other containment options are being considered.
- The active fire in the south is being held by ground crews to prevent spread.

NOTE: Alpha/Charlie deployments have been operating from in the North West

Gordon River Road South West

- No substantial change.
- Remote area crews are continuing to be inserted by helicopter, working inaccessible fire edges and working to contain hotspots.
- Progress continues to be made on securing fire edges; however, there are still remote hotspots to be accessed to the east of the fire perimeter and south of Gordon River Road.
- Suppression activities will continue for a number of weeks.
- Sustained extinguishment of hotspots is reducing the likelihood of the fire taking further runs.
- Yesterday (Tuesday, 16 February), crews were removed from the fire ground due to poor weather, which impacted firefighter safety. Despite this, some progress has been made with the establishment and consolidation of containment lines.

Note: Bravo/Delta deployments have been operating from in the South

A Few Acton Shots from the Field



Photo: Taskforce Charlie at Camp Clayton.





Photo: On the fire-line.



Photo: Taskforce Alpha, who were based in North West.



Photo: A common view from the helicopter as teams head into work.