



Canada Deployment 2017

Firefighters return from Canada Deployment – be there to welcome them home

To be attributed to Kevin O'Connor, National Manager Rural, Fire and Emergency New Zealand

What: Canada wildfires firefighter deployment team returns

When: 5.15AM, Sunday 10 September, International Arrivals, Auckland International Airport
Air New Zealand Flight NZ0001, Los Angeles to Auckland

Interview opportunities:

Nathan Jones: Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer, Fire and Emergency New Zealand
Taskforce Leader for a crew of twenty firefighters, Canada Deployment
Nathan is available for interviews at the airport and on 027 559 1011 (when travelling allows)

Lance Dixon Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer, Fire and Emergency New Zealand
Taskforce Leader for a crew of twenty firefighters, Canada Deployment
Lance is available for interviews at the airport and on 021 221 9496 (when travelling allows)

Background

Eighty firefighters return from a five-week deployment to Canada to help contain fires raging in the Province of British Columbia. Sixty firefighters will arrive in Auckland at 5:15am Sunday 10 September, the other twenty arrived on Wednesday.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand sent a team of 21 Incident Management specialists and 60 firefighters when Canada formally requested assistance for help.

“Canada was close to exhausting all available wildfire management resources within their country. To manage the fire situation and to provide on-going relief, they requested help from New Zealand, Australia, Mexico and the US. The deployment was drawn from across New Zealand and included rural firefighters, operational personnel and Incident Management experts,” said Kevin O'Connor, National Manager Rural, Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

The New Zealand deployment helped support the response to the fires, and was able to relieve some of our Canadian colleagues who had been working flat out since the start of the fire season. “Our people have a range of skills in high demand during lengthy firefighting operations. These include logistics, communications, planning, administration, ferrying supplies into remote locations and the management of aircraft for firefighting,” said Kevin O'Connor.

“The deployment has been an opportunity to grow our experience during a huge firefighting operation, and hone our skills in areas like incident management, which we will be able to use here in New Zealand. The benefits can't be understated,” said Kevin O'Connor.

Mario Bot, Canada's High Commissioner to New Zealand, wishes to extend a thank you to New Zealand firefighters for their assistance with battling these huge fires, and supporting Canadian firefighters: "I know the efforts of the New Zealand firefighters have been greatly appreciated by emergency services in British Columbia who are working tirelessly to control these fires and keep their communities safe. Assistance in times like these strengthen our already close bond, and I wish to thank the firefighters personally, and on behalf of Canada," said High Commissioner Mario Bot.

British Columbia Wildfire Status

At the time of deployment in early August, 149 wildfires were burning across British Columbia, Canada with 3,700 firefighters, and around 200 aircraft working hard to bring the fires under control.

As of now, around 160 fires are still burning, with over 3,800 firefighters and 180 aircraft deployed. Canada has had to cope with over 1,200 fires burning through nearly 1.2 million hectares since 1 April 2017.

New Zealand and Australian teams have been stood down as snow and rain are expected soon and there is adequate resource within the country to continue the response to the fires.

Previous deployments

New Zealand has had twenty firefighting international deployments since 2000, including four to Canada, six to the United States of America and ten to Australia.

Around 750 firefighters have participated in these deployments, representing our country, helping our international friends and colleagues, and bringing home new and valuable skills to apply here.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand in action

This is the first deployment as Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the new organisation that brought together forty fire organisations on 1 July 2017. The deployment has included people from Fire and Emergency, the Department of Conservation, Forestry and other contractors.

The formation of Fire and Emergency has been very helpful in streamlining and supporting the deployment. Firefighters who were previously part of separate fire agencies are now all part of one unified organisation. This makes it much easier to make arrangements for personnel and equipment to be deployed and crews to be supported while on deployment.

Visit our new website for more information on [Fire and Emergency New Zealand](#).

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Media Contact

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Firefighters at Elephant Hill, including the New Zealand crews.



The Incident Management Team on their way home on Wednesday.



NZ Deployment taskforce arrives, with NZ, British Columbia and Canadian flags proudly displayed