



**FIRE
EMERGENCY**

NEW ZEALAND

TASMANIA DEPLOYMENT UPDATE #2



Team Alpha awaiting aerial taxi

Fire and Emergency New Zealand's deployment in Tasmania has entered its third week, as the bushfires there continue to rage across the state.

The overall numbers of personnel fighting the fires has increased to more than 750, although weather conditions are predicted to ease this week and there are no big spike days predicted.

The group of seven Fire and Emergency incident management and aviation operations personnel that went to the island state on January 22 returned last weekend. They have been replaced by five aviation operations and three incident management personnel, who all departed on February 1.

The 21 arduous firefighters are in the midst of their second and final seven-day rotation, and will be returning to New Zealand on February 8. They will be replaced by five-person crews from FENZ (region 5), DOC, Forest Protection Services, and NZDF, along with a taskforce leader.

One of the returning aviation operations personnel, Atila de Oliveira, says the deployment was another great opportunity for Fire and Emergency to assist our Tasmanian colleagues.

Atila, a Principal Rural Fire Officer from the West Coast, says the Kiwis were well looked after and "everyone really appreciated our support".

He says the Australians' attention to detail in the incident management teams to maps, tracking aircraft and information technology was impressive, and something the FENZ personnel will be trying to replicate back in New Zealand.

"For staff deployed on the IMT positions, these details are very important to carry out our work efficiently."

TASMANIA WILDFIRE STATS

(AS OF 5 FEB 2019)

30 KIWI PERSONNEL
FROM FENZ, DOC AND
FORESTRY COMPANIES

8 IMT
20 ARDUOUS FIREFIGHTERS
1 TASKFORCE LEADER
1 LIAISON OFFICER

39 FIRES
BURNING

24 ARE CONSIDERED GOING
15 ARE IN PATROL

195,000

HECTARES HAVE BEEN BURNT

1,718km
OF FIRE LINE

713 PERSONNEL
WORKING
ON FIRES

182 INTERSTATE &
INTERNATIONAL
PERSONNEL

35 AIRCRAFT
DEPLOYED

8 ASSETS
DESTROYED

8 SEVERELY DAMAGED
13 MODERATELY DAMAGED
18 SLIGHTLY DAMAGED



Paul Shaw
Waikato Principal Rural
Fire Officer

Tassie Deployment – Invaluable Experience

“At times it was really humbling, just seeing how much the people there appreciated us”

One of the Fire and Emergency deployment personnel who returned last weekend says the whole experience was “amazing”.

Waikato Principal Rural Fire Officer Paul Shaw, who was working as an aircraft operations officer based in the north-west town of Burnie, says the deployment was hugely beneficial in terms of the learnings he will bring to the role back home.

Paul says the scale of the fires was mind-boggling. Large tracts of remote rainforest were sometimes left to burn because there simply weren't enough resources to fight all the fires.

“Just about the whole state is burning, so everyone you talked to is affected in some way, either themselves, family or friends.”

One of the fires he was monitoring, the Moores Valley Fire, was 32,000ha (or about half the size of Lake Taupo) – “the fire lines were just incredible”.

The other six fires they were actively working on ranged in size from 20ha to 7,000ha.

On another, a Boeing-737 from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service was employed to airdrop water – dropping 46,000 litres at a time.

Ground crews, called RATS (remote area teams), sometimes had resources airlifted to them because the terrain was so steep and heavily forested. One group he was supplying had a 1km walk to the fire ground that would take two hours, so resources such as portable pumps, hose packs and 10,000-litre portable dams were flown in by helicopter.

Paul says the Tasmanian community's gratitude for the Kiwi firefighters was

incredible, with people recognising their Fire and Emergency insignia and stopping them in the street.

“We were at a café by the beach on our day off, and a few surf lifeguards came up and said thanks to us.

“At times it was really humbling, just seeing how much the people there appreciated us,” Paul says.



GALLERY



Tasmanian firefighter



North West complex fire



Team Alpha back burning



Helicopter base in Hobart



ROC staff Craig, Alina, Steph



Thomas Harre



Team Alpha on patrol



Fenton Base Camp