



Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue.

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PRESS RELEASE

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Salt Spring Island Firefighters deploy to Williams Lake Wildfire

Salt Spring Island, July 13, 2017 – Due to the devastating wildfires in Northern BC Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue deployed our Reserve Water Tender with three firefighters to help in the suppression efforts in Williams Lake.

Our reserve Fire Tender is a 1997 Freightliner with a 1500 gallon water capacity. This apparatus became a reserve apparatus this year with the purchase of our new 3000 gallon Tender.

This is the first time the Province of BC has declared a provincial emergency and a Provincial Fire Service since the 2003 fires in Kelowna. In 2003 SSIFR Firefighters sent two trucks and personnel to help in those fires as well.

On Tuesday July 11, 2017 at 14:00 hrs., the Office of the Fire Commissioner of BC requested our apparatus to be deployed to Williams Lake immediately. Within 24 hours we had a crew ready to respond. SSIFR Lieutenant's Mitchell Sherrin and Colby Sawchuk along with Firefighter Warren Nuyens responded first thing July 12, 2017.

Our Crews arrived in Williams Lake at the staging area shortly after 20:00 hrs. Wednesday night. The air quality was reported to be very poor and a number of smaller fires noted on their travel. The crews were tasked to report to the command center at 07:00 hrs. Thursday July 13, 2017.

The Salt Spring Island crew (T119) joined forced with Peachland Fire (E107), View Royal Fire (E108), Salmon Arm Fire (T109) and Langley Fire (E115) as part of Task Force 3. Their primary goal is to protect the Tolko Mill in the White Lake fire region. Task Force 3 is working under the direction of a Kelowna Fire Chief.

As of July 12, 2017 a reported twenty-two (22) Fire Departments have sent apparatus and firefighters to help in the efforts.

Firefighter Warren Nuyens stated “there are three wood mills that are being threatened which is one of the city’s main industry” Nuyens reported that they experienced a weather change with cooler air but expected high winds and possible lightening later. They are doing their best to remove combustibles away from buildings in case the fire approaches. The fire front is only about 10 kms away from their current work area. The White Lake fire is estimated to be over 3800 hectares in size.

Our crew has been requested by the province for a minimum of six days. We may have a second deployment next week to replace the team if required.

The Cariboo region has been in an Extreme Fire Risk for a number of days and is forecasted to remain at an Extreme level. Salt Spring Island is still under a High fire risk and is forecasted to remain high for the next while. A High to Extreme Fire Danger rating means the fire risk is serious, and new fires may start easily and burn vigorously.

This event will provide help to a region in need while providing our local firefighters with incredible experience and knowledge to bring home to our operation.

The fire behavior and number of active fires we are seeing in BC is a timely warning to us all. It is not too late to FireSmart your home and property by ensuring you have a defensible space around your home. As temperatures rise, and our forests dry out, please use extreme caution. Let’s keep Salt Spring Island fire free this summer.

I will continue to provide updates on our members progress as they develop. For all those battling the fires, and supporting the efforts in British Columbia, thank you and stay safe and our thoughts are with all those affected by this devastating fire.



Arjuna George
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