

UK firefighters had exceptional sojourn in Sisters

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

Five firefighters from Great Britain are returning home with a wealth of professional information to integrate into their work — and many fond memories of their two-week stay in Sisters Country.

Sisters Camp Sherman Fire District hosted five firefighters from the United Kingdom as part of an international firefighter exchange program. The firefighters are from the Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service, which provides fire protection to Hampshire, U.K. and the Isle of Wight.

Hampshire Fire & Rescue intends to be among the top units in the UK, and to do that they are sending contingents to seek out subject matter experts in various aspects of the profession. They came to Sisters to tap expertise in managing wildland fire.

While Hampshire has nothing on the scale of the kind of fire we see in the West, they do have fires — and other incidents that can benefit from advanced study of infrastructure and logistics.

David Hodge, a station

manager with Hampshire Fire & Rescue, noted that his county deals with serious flooding, and what his crew learned about incident management on the Canyon Creek Fire near John Day is directly applicable to that type of incident.

“It can be transposed from wildland fire to any type of incident,” he said. “It’s the structure rather than the incident.”

The UK firefighters visited a variety of agencies, as well as responding to emergency calls. The UK crew visited the U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry and the Redmond Air Center, and spent considerable time asking detailed questions about operations.

“Everywhere those guys went, people were energized and eager to share their stories with them,” said Sisters Fire Chief Roger Johnson.

Hodge noted that the Firewise prevention program provided an example that they are eager to apply.

“That will be really useful to us also,” he said. “That’s something that’s only in its infancy, in Hampshire especially.”

Actually, though,



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Firefighters on an exchange program from the United Kingdom were enthusiastic about their welcome in Sisters.

Hampshire Fire & Rescue is regarded as a leader in providing community risk-mitigation services, and the Sisters fire department will be sending two personnel to the UK next year to focus on that aspect of the service.

“I think that’s really where we’re going to gain the most, going forward,” Chief Johnson noted. “It’s good to look outside your immediate area and get a broader view of the profession.”

Johnson said that

exchanges like this give an opportunity to see how others do their work and to pick up ideas that can be implemented to enhance local service.

More than the professional benefits they will take home with them, the Hampshire firefighters were struck by how open and welcoming the community of Sisters was.

“It was an exceptional experience,” Hodge said. “That’s from all five of us. Every one of us is taking home something special from

this... What a wonderful place you live in. Amazing place.”

Though they squeezed in a rafting trip and climbed Black Butte last Thursday, it was a working trip and there was little time to enjoy the attractions of the area. Hodge means to rectify that.

“I’ve already spoken with my wife and said I want to come back in the next two years,” he said. “I don’t want to do the big touristy things. I just want to come to Sisters.”




OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, September 17, 2015
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

601 North Larch Street
Sisters, Oregon 97759



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to our
Open House!

Please come join us
for food, fun
and music.