

## FIREFIGHTERS: UK crew got a lot of exposure to wildland firefighting

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firefighters was really great, they share their knowledge with us, and we share our experiences with them, and it's just a wealth of information being exchanged," Hodges said.

When asked the difference between wildland firefighting and urban firefighting, there was one overwhelming answer from all the team members: The scale of a forest fire is far greater than fires they see in the UK.

"The scale and duration of the fire is massive, the longest fire we've seen burn is around three days, and this one has been burning for two weeks," Elliott told *The Nugget*.

They noted that it is much easier to manage a structure fire because there aren't fuels around it that they have to deal with; they just have a more confined area to work within. "We aren't used to handling fires of such scale with such large teams," said Hodges.

"The size of the incident management team is around 82 here, and our largest team we would have would be about 10," said Station Manager Hodge.

"The fire started when we landed, so we've gotten to see it escalate as we've been here and we've managed to see all aspects of the fire as well, being on the fire line, behind the scenes with the planning, and seeing the command (and) control side of things, it's all been really beneficial," said Station Manager Dean Hodges.

"All the members of the incident management team and task forces have taken the time to explain the decision-making process, as well as explain all their roles and what they do. Even when they were so focused on the development of the fire, they still take the time to explain their plan of attack, and why it would be effective," said David Hodge.

Dean Hodges concurred: "They are all really passionate about the subject as well, and they've all made us feel really welcome."

When asked what it was like being on the fire line, the team went back to the size and scale. It was something they had never seen before.

"Some of the tactics that the wildland firefighters use are ones we just don't use at home; we can understand why they use them, we just don't require those same tactics on a fire at home," said Maidment. "It takes an



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The Sisters-Camp Sherman Board (Jack McGowan, Heather Johnson, Bill Rainey, Roger White and Chuck Newport) presenting a plaque recognizing their exchange program to Station Manager David Hodge, Watch Manager Martyn Elliott, Station Manager Dean Hodges and Firefighter Daniel Maidment.

incredible amount of work to even do a mile's worth of work."

"You get to smell it, you get to see it, you get to feel the rush of air coming by your legs from the undercurrent, the whole spectacle of it, and the teamwork that goes into it is an incredible thing to see," said Dean Hodges.

The Hampshire fire department doesn't really see many wildfires in their area because they are in a developed, urban

part of the UK that lies about an hour southeast of London toward the southern coast of England. Most of the wildfires they see are in South Wales. The landscape looks very different, but they apply some of the same principles seen here — but on a much smaller scale. They do some backburning patchwork in some of the new forests surrounding them.

The UK firefighters were very impressed by the amount

of public involvement there is on a fire of this scale.

"The information to the public is so transparent, when people did ask for information, nothing was held back. The support from the public is insane, the messages of support come into the fire station daily. It shows how much people believe in what the firefighters do," said Maidment.

"Even the people who had been evacuated from

their homes were still positive towards the firefighters, which a wonderful, supportive thing to see in a community," said David Hodge.

The team overall has had a great experience just spending time outside of work going into businesses in town.

All of the Hampshire firefighters concurred that "everyone has been very welcoming, it's been a wonderful experience for all of us."

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