

Cremona firefighters battle Fort Mac fire

BY PATRICIA RILEY
MVP Staff

Six Cremona firefighters recently volunteered their services to help battle a raging wildfire in Fort McMurray.

The fire forced the city's 88,000 residents to evacuate on May 3 and has consumed more than 500,000 hectares of land and 2,400 structures.

Thirty-four people serve on the Cremona and Water Valley fire department and fire Chief Kevin Miller said

there was no shortage of volunteers.

"When you know a community nearby is in such a difficult and traumatic situation, I guess we all in the fire service can empathize," said Miller.

"If we were in the same situation we would want as much help as we can get."

Andrew Haggblad, Joel Newsome and Chad Ferner were the first three members to battle the blaze in Fort McMurray from May 6 to 10.

Tanis Newbery, Mike Temple and

Jarret Moon were the second crew to join the fight from May 10 to 14.

"I was trying to sift through who to let go because obviously I couldn't send everybody," said Miller.

"We've got to keep our critical staffing levels, you know, to a point where we can keep our protection services fully capable for our own area first," he said.

"I'm very proud of my firefighters. I know that they did a great job and I know that they were going there for

the right reasons and that's to assist a community that was experiencing a disaster and they were in need."

He said they were tired at the end of each day and spent a lot of time moving a lot of hose.

"I know that they were worked quite hard," he said.

"They covered a lot of ground because, as you can imagine, protecting an entire city from a very large forest fire, that's a big area to cover."

Firefighters 'felt it was their duty' to help

BY PATRICIA RILEY
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Four Cremona firefighters who recently volunteered their services to help battle a raging wildfire in Fort McMurray say they felt like it was their duty.

The fire forced the city's 88,000 residents to evacuate on May 3 and has consumed more than 500,000 hectares of land and 2,400 structures.

"It's just what you do," said Tanis Newbery, who was on the second crew from Cremona to help in Fort McMurray from May 10 to 14.

"I don't know if overwhelming is the word but (it was) a lot to take in initially when we got there," she said. "We all knew there would be a lot of work and a lot to do and a lot of destruction and stuff like that, but when you actually get there and see it firsthand...I'm not sure anything could really prepare you for what we saw."

She, along with Mike Temple and Jarret Moon, drove to Edmonton with other Mountain View County firefighters on May 10 and flew to Fort McMurray from there.

They spent a lot of time dousing hot spots and setting up sprinklers to try to contain the fire.

"I just wanted to try to get everyone back to their homes as soon as possible," said Temple, adding it was hard to leave his wife and three young kids at home.

"My older boys, they were worried, they missed me, but I talked to them every morning before school," he said.

He has served on the department for 10 months and works for the Village of Cremona.

Newbery works as an EMT for Alberta Health Services and Moon was able to get time off from his full-time job as a carpenter.

Although many people across Canada have been referring to the firefighters involved in

the Fort McMurray fire as heroes, Moon believes otherwise.

"I don't see myself as a hero. The Fort Mac firemen, they're the heroes," said Moon.

He has served on the department for seven years and enjoys volunteer firefighting because it's challenging and educational.

"It's a great bunch of people, pretty much like a big family," added Temple. "The main thing I like is being able to help out people, people in stress and in time of need, it's just a good feeling to be able to help them when they need you," he said.

Andrew Haggblad was on the first crew from Cremona to help battle the blaze in Fort McMurray from May 6 to 10, along with Joel Newsome and Chad Ferner.

"A lot of the (Fort McMurray firefighters) I talked to were at their houses when they were burning to the ground,"



Patricia Riley/MVP Staff

Cremona firefighters (from left to right) Andrew Haggblad, Jarret Moon, Tanis Newbery and Mike Temple recently volunteered their services to help battle a raging wildfire in Fort McMurray.

said Haggblad, who has served on the department for seven years and works full-time in a gravel crusher.

"They were so thankful. We collect patches and they were taking the patches right off their shirts to give to us."

The four firefighters expressed gratitude for the members who stayed back and took care of

operations at the department.

"We're a team and everybody supports everybody," said Newbery, who has served on the department on and off for 13 years.

"We were the ones that were fortunate enough when everybody stepped up to be chosen to go up, but there were lots of people that stayed here to keep our area safe."