

Case Study | 2016 Fort McMurray Wildfire

360° view of the Horse River Fire

On May 1st, 2016 a massive wildfire broke out in the Fort McMurray region. The wildfires quick spread and intensity caused provincial and city officials to issue an evacuation notice on May 3rd to all 80,000 residents, and subsequently all workers and employees from the various refineries and work camps. It grew in size as the weeks went by to cover over 582,000 hectares of land in Fort McMurray and surrounding areas, including land in Saskatchewan. In all a total of 2,400 structures were destroyed by the fire that took months to fully contain and eventually extinguish. The fire size and scope make it one of Canada's costliest (estimated at over \$9B to rebuild the community) and most severe disaster in history.

With approximately 600 employees in Fort McMurray, 2,000 in Edmonton, 2,000 in Calgary and 500 in our regional Aviation Services division, GardaWorld is one of the top private employers in the province of Alberta. Some of these employees, along with additional support from Montreal headquarters and various branches across the nation, were essential to carrying out the relief efforts that were implemented once the Fort McMurray region caught fire.

Securing people and assets in an emergency situation

There were one thousand things to do as soon as the fire first took form. GardaWorld took an all-hands-on-deck approach across its different business lines to ensure that these needs were met regardless of the level of associated difficulty. Despite experiencing a catastrophic natural disaster, employees working in the Fire Zone Fort McMurray managed to keep their morale high and displayed outstanding determination and perseverance throughout the entire situation. They truly went above and beyond the average call of duty.

In less than 24 hours, GardaWorld was able to supply 50 guards and 25 trucks at the request of the Fort McMurray Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). The short notice is usually seen as challenging, but with an immense pool of resources, GardaWorld was able to assemble a qualified team and fill EOC's needs. As many as 80 guards, along with 40 vehicles, were on duty in the city and surrounding area at one specific time. Their primary mandate was to assist police with road blocks at access control points, and provide security patrols within the burned out areas. Occasionally having to provide first aid services to those in need. In one such incident, they saved the life of a child who had stopped breathing.

Our Fort McMurray management team of 13, under the direction of Cy King, Vice President & Senior Advisor for Industrial Projects and Aboriginal Relations, were deployed to four strategic locations outside of Fort McMurray and worked around the clock to ensure operations continued to run as smoothly as possible. The locations selected proved to be vital to the continuous operation of the Fort McMurray office.

Approximately 50% of our guard force were forced to flee the fires and were scattered across evacuation centres in Alberta. With great trust in management, GardaWorld leaders motivated remaining teams and carried out site-specific emergency plans for some of the leading companies in the Oil and Gas industry. Strategic operations were adhered to and teamwork was at an all-time high. As others were fleeing town,

we were being asked to send guards in to protect our clients' assets and to assist the camps with additional manpower needed to support the extreme influx of evacuees.

Below are more examples of tasks GardaWorld personnel carried out at the time:

- Security guards were called upon to remain behind and ensure the continuity of security services. For the client sites that were left vulnerable, they performed a daily patrol service and provided feedback to our clients on the conditions of their property.
- Fort McMurray Branch Field Supervisor remained within the RMWB fire zone and provided insight on getting access to the city core, road closures, and air quality index reports. This information was vital to the ability to phase back our displaced guards to their home sites and to able to provide the additional staff requested by the RMWB.
- Temporary Quartermaster ensured the team had the uniforms, boots and safety supplies ready for each security guard as they arrived at their home site.
- Mobile fleet was tasked with accessing and moving our fleet from the downtown core during extremely poor air quality conditions, as well as securing and moving an additional 40 vehicles required for emergency services.
- Human Resources, along with our Aboriginal partners, Operations and supporting Edmonton and Calgary branches made it possible to supply the RMWB with the additional support requested to secure the City for a safe re-entry process.
- Fort McMurray Health and Safety team was tasked with providing Fit testing* to all guards working within the RMWB – this has reached as many as 200 tests performed by one person and continues to be an ongoing process. Also, the increased activity of wildlife and bears into the city has tasked this department with ensuring our personnel are trained to be safe while working in these areas.
** Fit testing verifies that all respirators that rely on a mask-to-face seal provide an acceptable fit to the wearer.*

[GardaWorld Edmonton branch supporting the Fort McMurray team](#)

Here is a snapshot of support efforts that occurred in the first 72 hours from the Edmonton branch:

- The Control Centre provided 20+ guards on standby, in addition to 5 security professionals who worked “against the clock” to get everyone on time for the flight manifest.
- The Scheduling team added and removed the members within the bull-pen to best cater to the needs at hand.
- The Regional Health and Safety Director stepped in and provided advice on how to ensure that the team was amply prepared from a safety point of view.
- Human Resources jumped to hire staff with help from our Aboriginal Relations & Economic Development Director, as well as uniform them, getting them ready to be deployed.
- The mobile division went as far as driving guards to the airport to catch their flights and prepared survival kits with food and other items required for a deployment, unspecified in length.

Also worth mentioning, the GardaWorld Cash Services division provided emergency services for financial institutions and White Label ATM customers requiring service in towns that became evacuation centers for the Fort McMurray citizens.

Securing safe travelling in surrounding airports

Our Edmonton International Airport branch deployed two security personnel to the Alberta Health Services Hanger to provide a level of security for the several inbound medivac flights. 25 patients were sheltered in place at the hanger until such time that they could receive conveyance to a hospital. A security guard also acted as a staging officer for the ambulance units dispatched to the airport and Edmonton transit buses. The deployed security guard was positioned along the airport road at the designated staging area and upon arrival of the conveyance vehicles – coordinated with the EOC on where the units were to be escorted to. Security escort vehicles then facilitated the escorting to the identified areas.

A very large medivac flight arrived with 75 patients and 25 medical personnel including nurses and other medical staff from the Fort McMurray hospital. Our staff assisted in setting up two triage areas in the North Hold room and assisted the EMS staff in moving the 20 wheelchair-bound patients and elderly patients to buses.

We provided security for our terminal Relief Centre whereby food and beverages and an area to rest was opened up to inbound evacuees awaiting connecting flights. The number of people within the Relief Centre varied from 50 plus evacuees to 5 evacuees. There were also an assortment of pets including dogs, cats, birds and reptiles. Security remained on station at the Relief Centre as there were some evacuees waiting for over 24-hours before a flight was made available.

Staff maintain a dedicated presence on the departures level so as to monitor and facilitate crowd control management when the passenger screening queues spilled out. The load factors were very heavy with the over 80,000 evacuees departing for their home provinces. In some cases, there were three Airport Security employees on crowd control management and where additional queuing lines were created and maintained as pre-board screening dealt with the increase in passengers being screened.

Staff displayed outstanding customer service and showed compassion to the evacuees while maintaining our commitment to airport security and responding as per normal operations to all alarm conditions, unattended bags, medical events, and other incidents requiring our response.

Implementing employee engagement initiatives

GardaWorld employee portal - Updates were provided to our security personnel on the scene via the GardaWorld employee portal. The internal tool brought everyone up to speed on the fires progression over the weeks. Employees could conveniently log into the portal and have access to a plethora of information, in real time, ensuring that efforts were coordinated and under control.

Canadian Red Cross - Throughout our efforts to protect our employees, clients, and citizens of the Fort McMurray area, we maintained our steadfast commitment to the community. GardaWorld made a significant donation to the Canadian Red Cross to help support the community and ensure a quick recovery. In addition, donation boxes were set up at 17 of our 32 offices across the country.

To learn more about our emergency security services, contact your regional public security expert:

- **Western Canada, Central & Atlantic**
Scott Young, scott.young@garda.com
- **Quebec**
Patrick Nadon, patrick.nadon@garda.com
- **Northern Canada**
Cy King, cy.king@garda.com

1 855 GO GARDA (464 2732)