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## Massachusetts sends 15 local firefighters to battle blazes in forests of northern Quebec

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 11, 2013 12:23 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

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Fifteen state and municipal wildland firefighters from Massachusetts are on their way to help battle forest fires in northern Quebec that have burned for more than one month, scorching more than 1 million acres.

The local firefighters were scheduled to join with six firefighters from Maine on Wednesday and then fly together to the Canadian province morning, according to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

In Quebec, the 21 firefighters will form a specialized "Type 2 initial attack hand crew" and will be assigned to help contain and extinguish one of several large fires, officials said.

The group is expected to work there for about two weeks, directly trying to suppress flames, building fire breaks, securing fire perimeters and protecting structures.

Each of the firefighters traveling to Quebec have passed a required 40-four federal wildland firefighting class and physical fitness test, officials said.

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The deployment came in response to a request for help from the Northeast Forest Fire Protection Commission, which is a 64-year-old compact between the six New England states, New York and four eastern Canadian provinces, including Quebec, to provide mutual aid in responding to wildland fires.

The compact dictates that the state or province that requests aid will pay all expenses of visiting crews, including salary, transportation, lodging and food, officials said.

“We are extremely proud of the DCR and municipal firefighters who have been called upon to help our friends and partners in Quebec,” said a statement from Jack Murray, commissioner of the conservation and recreation department. “These are extremely well-trained and dedicated firefighters whose skills are much needed, and whose help, we know, is enormously appreciated.”

The fires in remote areas of northern Quebec began on June 9 and have caused at least one community to [evacuate](#), disrupted some food shipments to the region and led to [major power outages](#), according to the Associated Press.

Firefighters from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation include:

Shawn Bush of Oakham  
Aaron Whiddon of Plymouth  
Jonathan Hallinan of Peabody  
Jesse Hanecak of Whately  
Benjamin Jennell of West Newbury  
Brian Mayer of Groton  
Joshua Nigro of Hanson  
Millard Ring of Rockport  
Eric Rogers of Holyoke  
Gregory Whittier of Springfield

Municipal firefighters include:

John Branscombe of North Brookfield  
Bruce Forgea of Windsor  
Seth McMahon of Greenfield  
George Nolette IV of North Brookfield  
Michael Grimley of Townsend

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