



# FeedLine

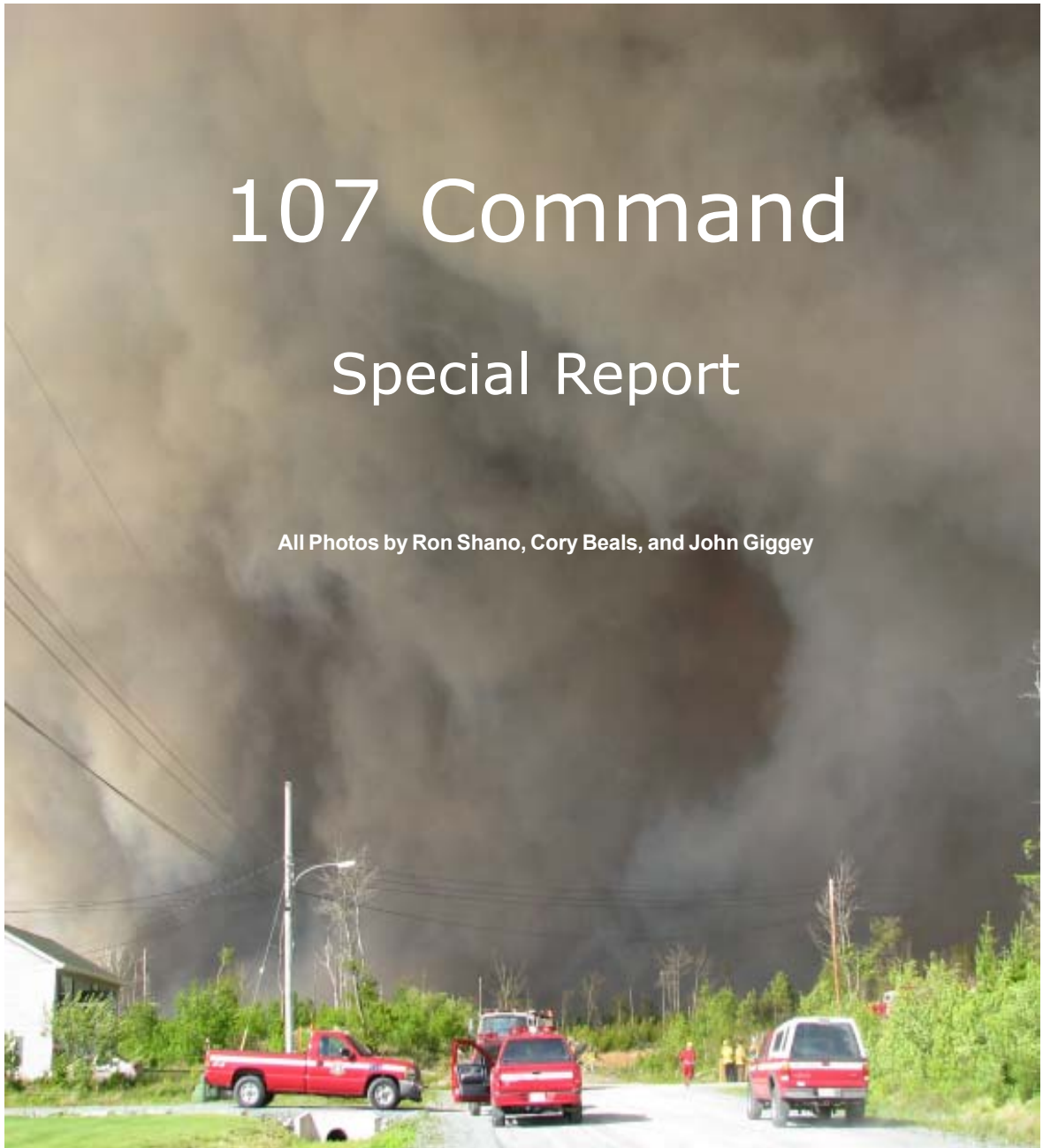
Serving Canada's Largest Composite Fire Service

Special Edition No. 1

July 2008

## 107 Command Special Report

All Photos by Ron Shano, Cory Beals, and John Giggey



FeedLine's first Special Edition is dedicated to our many members whose devotion to duty saved so many homes from the most threatening forest fire we've ever experienced in HRM. Above is the scene on Shoreline Dr. in Mineville soon after the fire began on the afternoon of June 13. Firefighters were later forced to withdraw from this position. Inside are some of their stories from the early hours of the fire, as well as a selection of photos of the incident.

June 19, 2008

To All Members:

As I sat down to write this I was not sure I would be able to capture my true feelings and just how proud I am of all of you and our service.

I want to express a heartfelt "thank you" to all members for your tremendous efforts in saving lives and properties during the fires last weekend in Porters Lake/Lake Echo and in Tantallon.

You worked tirelessly to contain and control the forest fires and did a stellar job in face of horrendous odds. You demonstrated teamwork, dedication and leadership and I am proud to be a part of Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency.

Your professional, coordinated response helped mitigate what could have been a dire situation in both incidents. I acknowledge the enormous contribution and valiant efforts you made as a team as well as the many individual efforts.

Homes, personal property and lives were saved due to your efforts!

Your dedication and passion shone through more than you will ever know. You made a difference in the lives of many residents of HRM. It is an honour to work with and for our members who are dedicated to their profession and who show a commitment to our values.

On behalf of myself and the Executive Management Team, I commend you for a job well done!

Sincerely,  
William Mosher  
Chief Director



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### Fire Stats

**Burned:** 5,200 square hectares (about 52 square kilometres) (almost 13,000 acres)  
About 13 Kilometres long. About 2 kilometres wide in places.

### Equipment:

-HRFE: 29 pumpers and tankers, one quint, multiple support vehicles including tactical units, utilities, rescues, rangers, and logistics units over three days.  
-DNR: Besides ground units, 10 aircraft; most of them in the air at any given time.

### Personnel:

-HRFE: Close to 200 career and volunteer members over three days. *(FDM reports incomplete)*  
-DNR: 120 firefighters on the ground during much of the incident.

The fire had a front approximately 1.5 kilometres wide when it crossed the No. 7 Highway, and a front of almost 2.5 kilometres when it crossed Highway 107.

This was the largest commitment of resources to a single incident since HRFE was formed in 1996.

We are including two 'First In' accounts. One by Capt. George Kendall of Station 21, the first member to spot the fire and the officer who started gathering the resources for a large evacuation, and FF Geoff Garber of Station 21, whose unit was first to arrive at the main fire.

### First In E-21 Capt. George Kendall

We got a phone call at the station from dispatch that someone had reported smoke about two and a half miles back in the woods near the Wonderland Trailer Park. They were wondering if this type of call would be a DNR or an HRM matter.

That far in the woods would be DNR, but I told dispatch we (driver Greg Gibson and I) would take a tour of the area anyway. I was really concerned about the weather. There is a camp for disabled adults at the end of River Road and we thought that could be a serious exposure if there was something. We went up there but didn't find anything.

I was worried about the high winds so we decided to go back to Circle Drive. I thought I saw a wisp of smoke, but Greg still could not see anything. There is a road that runs off Circle Dr. so we started up there. In the meantime there was a call about smoke further down No. 7 Highway and I asked dispatch to send E-23 out of Chezzetcook to check that out. They were starting to get phone calls and were getting on the road anyway.

When we got back further, there it was. It was several thousand feet away from us and moving fast. I notified dispatch there was nothing we could do here and were going to check on its direction.

We headed back to the No. 7 highway and as soon as our tires hit the pavement and I could see down the road, I told dispatch to call

the RCMP and start an evacuation. I remember they asked me what streets and I told them I did not know at this time, all I did know it was coming at us fast. I remember there was a big white cloud, like a fog bank, except we knew it was smoke. At the top was a wreath of grey smoke with a tail coming off, it was trailing behind because the fire being pushed by the high winds was moving so fast.



I went from not seeing anything to starting to organize for a big evacuation in minutes. By now calls were coming into dispatch and we had several units on the road. I also asked for the Platoon Chief and District Captain.

We met E-23 on the No. 7 heading in town. I asked them to put their

engine across the highway and stop the traffic. I notified dispatch we were shutting down the highway. Tanker 21 was coming behind us and they shut down the road on the other end.

Our concern at this time was for the number of vehicles that were stopped on the highway watching the fire. I got the real sense they had no idea of what was coming at them. We got the road clear and within minutes the fire was crossing the highway. By now the front of the fire was probably half a kilometre wide.

We tried setting up in several places but the fire kept pushing us back. There was no putting it out anyway. Nothing was going to stop this. It was just a matter of getting people out of the way. There were rabbits everywhere, running out of the woods. They didn't know what to do. When we moved our trucks they would race alongside of us. When we stopped, they stopped.

With the fire across the old No. 7 and now beginning to cross the 107, PC (Bryson) Wilson and I wound up on opposite sides of the fire. I was cut off from where command would be set up on the 107 and so PC Wilson assumed command by radio. After that I basically joined crews on a flank.

**PHOTO — Early arriving units on the 107 where it has just been determined that the fire has already jumped the highway. The orange concrete truck which caught fire briefly coming through the blaze is parked on the left side of the highway.**



**TOO LATE —** Several early arriving units gather on the 107 Highway. There was an initial plan to try and stop the fire here. But it had already crossed when these members arrived. They were soon redeployed to other threatened areas.

#### First In - FF Geoff Garber

I received a phone call at the station from one of the Chezzetcook volunteers, reporting black smoke in the air in the Myra Rd. / Hwy #7 area. I asked her to call it in to dispatch. The tones came in just as we were pulling out of the door and as soon as we were on the road all we could see was a very large column of smoke.

Along the way it was just a guessing game of where we had to go. By now we were talking to George (Capt. Kendall) on the radio and I thought it might be along the Myra Road somewhere. But as we kept going we found that our best vantage point seemed to be the No. 7 near Parker Lane. That's where I established command. I got up on the truck and I could see the fire about 700 to 800 feet off the road and coming our way pretty fast.

Just about then E21 arrived on scene and

command was quickly passed to Capt. Kendall. We got the trucks turned around for a retreat and started an evacuation. A number of units started arriving and we had everyone just focus on stopping traffic and going from door to door on the surrounding streets and getting everyone out.

There was no attempt at this time to fight the fire. This was definitely not something that you would want to stand in front of. It was like a freight train coming at you. It was just a windstorm of embers once the fire passed over the road.

We would reposition the apparatus and within minutes we would have to move again, retreating as the fire moved along the road. We moved at least half a dozen times. Our truck was reassigned to another sector. But once the main fire had passed, I believe some units made a stand at Parker Lane, protecting homes.

## Incident Command - Day 1

### Platoon Chief Bryson Wilson

At approximately 15:00 hrs on June 13<sup>th</sup> I received a call from dispatch making me aware of a large brush fire in the Lake Echo area. I responded from station 13 and tried to meet up with command, Captain George Kendall at Parker Lane.

Shortly after I passed station 21, I encountered the fire. It had crossed the #7 hwy and was heading towards the 107. Tanker 21 was on location (on Highway 7) and had the road blocked with the aid of the RCMP.

Dist. Captain John MacNeill arrived and was dispatched to Hwy 107 for an assessment. DNR had an officer on location and we also proceeded to Hwy 107 to gain a better view for an approach on how to attack this blaze. About a mile past exit 18 the fire had already jumped Hwy 107.

Captain Kendall was still in command on the eastern flank as we were separated by fire and the highway was impassable. While on Hwy 107 I was in contact with Deputy Chief Roy Hollett and Barry Manuel from EMO looking for an update. I requested a helicopter from DNR for aerial surveillance and was in the sky in about 20 minutes.

When back on the ground I reported that the incident was going to escalate very quickly. Emergency Site Management was set up with Deputy Chief Hollett as the site manager, Barry Manuel as EMO, and Asst Dep. Chief Bryan Clarke as fire representative on the ESM team. Command for the fire was then assumed by myself from Captain Kendall and he was now Parker Lane sector. The main command post was being set up on Hwy 107 at exit 18 as we spoke.

From the aerial view with DNR we started to put a

plan in place to try and restrict the fire from spreading to surrounding areas including homes. Evacuation had begun in the Candy Mountain Rd. and Shoreline Dr. areas.

At this time the fire was burning out of control and we did not have the resources to bring it under control. DNR was in the process of bringing in the aerial assault. At this time we had 3 helicopters but we were making very little headway. The large water bombers would not be on scene until Saturday afternoon.



The fire scene was sectorized off by geographical areas and we were maintaining exposure crews for the residential areas. Rehab and staging were set up at the medical center on the Mineville Road.

Considering the size of the fire and the number of communities threatened, I think the operation went quite well. I think that this was probably one of the worst forest fires we have been faced within the province, let alone HRM. To all involved, a job well done.

**GETTING IT TOGETHER – Having just assumed command, Platoon Chief Bryson Wilson (above) starts organizing 107 Command which will sit in the middle of the 107 Highway for about four days. This is less than an hour into the fire. All of the white in the background is smoke. At this point the fire has already jumped the highway a mile down the road.**

**Dist. Capt. East  
John MacNeill**

Arriving at the No. 7 highway and meeting with PC (Bryson) Wilson, it was decided to respond to the 107 with a couple of tankers to attempt a stop at this location if the fire hadn't yet crossed the highway.

Upon our arrival at the 107, the fire had already crossed and was heading toward the Candy Mountain / Shoreline Dr. area. Upon arrival at this location it was clear that the fire was moving quickly and the call to evacuate the residents was made.

Crews then made their way to the top of Shoreline Dr. where an attempt to stop the fire would be made. DNR helicopters were in the area as well and they were making continuous drops. However the winds were too strong and with heavy smoke closing in it was decided that the area was not safe to stay and crews evacuated to a safe location on lower Candy Mountain Road and eventually to rehab.

After some time and a slight wind shift, a return was made to Candy Mountain where it was safe enough to resume operations and attempt to save some property. Although two homes had already burned to the ground there were several others with fires very close which had the ability to be saved.

From Chiefs to Fire-fighters, both career and volunteer, it was really a combined effort. Everybody did a great job. It looked very bad, but everybody stepped up to the plate!



**WAITING FOR IT – Dist. Capt. John MacNeill (left) and members from Stations 17 and 21 wait in the driveway at the top of Shoreline Dr. for the oncoming fire on Friday afternoon. Below, shortly after MacNeill's crew was forced to withdraw, a DNR water bomber defends homes along Candy Mountain Rd.**



**Capt. Cory Dominix  
Station 21, Lake Echo**

We were in Tanker 21. When we got to the location of the fire on Highway 7 we couldn't go any further. Capt. Kendall had made his way past the fire before we got there and was at the other end. He advised us to shut down the road.

The flames were at least 30 feet above the tree line. It was making its own wind and was moving very fast. We had to retreat several times.

Then we assembled a group with Dist. Capt. (John) MacNeill and went to the 107 to see if we could keep it from crossing the highway. But when we got down the road, it had already crossed.

The fire was heading to Candy Mountain Rd. so Command sent us there. We used the PA system in the truck to tell everyone to evacuate.

We positioned on Shoreline Dr. to make a stand. But we were overcome by the fire. We had lines off and I noticed something unusual. The bark mulch in all the gardens and flower beds started to burn. The fire hadn't touched it. The mulch just started to burn.

Then it went from daylight to dark. The smoke just banked right down on us. We had to back out.

We started down Candy Mountain and we thought we'd reposition along the street. But there was no chance. It was going too fast and we had to leave. It was a convoy coming out. We regrouped at command and went back. That's when we made some stands and saved some homes.



**STRATEGY – (Above) Maps in hand, Station 21 (Lake Echo) Capt. Cory Dominix and District Captain John MacNeill lay out a plan at the top of Shoreline Dr. during the first day as the fire advances behind them. They later had to withdraw from the area. From left are Lt. Colin White and FF Robert Pousseau of Station 17 (Cole Harbour), Capt. Dominix, DC MacNeill, and Executive Officer Lloyd Currie.**

**(Below) Lake Echo members prepare to protect homes at the end of Shoreline Dr. as the fire threatens the area.**





**JUST STARTING (above)** – This photo along Highway 107 was taken very early in the incident. The fire has just jumped the No. 7 Highway and is heading for the 107. It crossed the main highway with a front more than two kilometres wide.

**LOOKOUT POINT (right)** – DNR Firefighters Greg Coriacken and Mike MacLellan, based in Shubenacadie, are joined by FF George Collard (right) of E-8 Alpha (Bedford) on the roof of a large home on Leslie Rd. as they keep an eye on the advancing fire.



**HOMES THREATENED (below)** – These homes along Dempster Cr. in Mineville appear to be threatened by the fire soon after it crossed the 107 on day one. However a shift in the wind took the fire in another direction.





**GOING DOWNHILL FAST** (above) – The situation begins to deteriorate quickly on Shoreline Dr. about two hours into the fire. A few minutes later the smoke banked down sharply reducing visibility to almost nothing and members had to withdraw from the area.



**CHANGING TACTICS** (left) – With the initial plan of stopping the fire at the 107 now a lost cause, District Captain John MacNeill and Capt. Cory Dominix of Station 21 take a few minutes to consult.

**FIRE PHOTOGRAPHY** (below) – People take pictures of Candy Mountain Rd. from a campground across Lawrencetown Lake during the first day of the fire. It was about this time our units were withdrawing.





**TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT** – This home on the Mineville Rd. also escaped the fire. A change in wind direction took the fire away from the house. It's owned by Joe McKay, who's son is Brian McKay of E-14, A Platoon.

#### **FF Brian Rix, Station 62**

*(FF Rix was off duty this day, but he describes his attempt to make it to his home in Porters Lake, which meant passing the area where the fire was crossing the 107 Highway.)*

The 107 had not been closed yet. I wanted to get to my home in Porter's Lake. There was a lot of smoke across the road.

I started down the highway and met Spinner (Capt. John MacNeill) who was just driving out of the smoke. He had checked to see if it was safe to get down the highway. But he told me he only went about 50 feet and turned around. He said it wasn't safe. He said not only was the smoke so thick you couldn't see, but you could actually make out flames in the smoke ahead.

As I came down the road, I had noticed a cement truck at the side of the highway. The driver was using the garden hose on his truck. Now I saw he had driven about 100 feet past us then stopped again. I thought I saw smoke coming from his wheels.

Spinner asked him if his truck was on fire. He said: "Yes. But I'll worry about the truck." Then pointing back down the road, he said: "You worry about that back there."

We figure that was the last vehicle to get by on the highway before we closed it.



**BAILING OUT** -- A convoy of trucks withdraw from Candy Mountain Road about three hours into the call as the fire rages behind them.



**AMAZING SAVE** – Divisional Captain Dave Meldrum and department photographer Ron Shano have a look at this house on Candy Mountain Road which was undamaged except for this one corner. On the first day of the fire, Divisional Chief Dave Smith and Divisional Captain Dave Clement, both of Logistics, noticed the corner burning as they drove by. They slowed the fire down with water from a garden hose and shovels of dirt. Meantime Ostrea Lake's E-25 had just been deployed in the area. They were quickly diverted here and made the save.



**FAST EVAC (left)** – This is what remained of a home on Candy Mountain Rd. on the second day of the fire, one of two homes destroyed on this street. With the fire rapidly closing in, two of our members and two paramedics rushed to this home to reach two senior citizens who had been missed in the evacuation. The home caught fire a short time later. At right, E-17 member Don Nelson hoses down the area around a large home on Candy Mountain Rd. Saturday afternoon. When the fire moved in, it burned to the drenched area and stopped. The home was not damaged.



**Members take a break at the evacuation point on Candy Mountain Rd. after being forced to withdraw from their positions by the advancing fire on the second day of the operation. In the forefront is Lt. Roger Bourque of Station 18 in Cole Harbour.**

#### **Station 21 Deputy Chief Jim Marlow**

It was 15:00 when I heard sirens. I checked the pager to find out that we had a brush fire. As I came down my street I could see it was more than that and it was going pretty good. I responded in my own vehicle and pulled in behind Tanker 21. I noticed they had already blocked the road (No. 7 Highway).

Capt. Dominix and FF Dubé had to back up the tanker three times to keep clear of the smoke. Then we got a call that somebody was trapped in the middle of the forest fire on a four-wheeler.

I know the area so I went in my own truck down a logging road and I found them. Luckily they weren't in any danger and in fact were assisting DNR crews getting hose to an area where they could set up. I also

determined that the area I was in was probably the point of origin so I notified command of this.

I then helped DNR set up as well. As a DNR helicopter arrived I went for a flight with them for a few minutes to get a bird's eye view of what we had. It had already crossed both the No. 7 and the 107 and was heading towards Candy Mountain. With the heavy winds, it was moving vigorously, burning everything in its path.

When I got back on the ground I communicated this information to Capt. Kendall, who was still in command. Once the team was out of the woods I proceeded to the command post where I wound up spending the majority of the weekend.



**JUST WATCHING –** (Above) Members watch the fire burn out to the road after evacuating this section of Candy Mountain on the second day of the fire. From left are Capt. Jeff Bourgeois (Quint-12, D Platoon); Zone 3 Chief Rob Patey, two DNR firefighters, Assistant Deputy Director Bryan Clarke, an RCMP member, and Deputy Director Steve Thurber.

**STILL GOING –** The fire burned all night Friday, and despite efforts by our own and DNR firefighters, it was soon threatening homes again on Saturday. At right, members pour water on visible fire from the No. 7 Highway early Saturday morning.





**RE-HAB –** Some Cole Harbour members crash at Re-hab Saturday morning, exhausted from a long night of protecting homes from the encroaching fire. The night sky was lit up most of the night from the flames. From left are Paul Sherring, Paul Marshall, Nick Foshav and Nick Whitehead.



**Members attack hot spots on Candy Mountain Rd. during the second day.**



**TOP:** Seen between power lines, a water bomber drops its load in the Candy Mountain Rd. area.



**LEFT:** Units are barely visible as smoke banks down on Shoreline Dr.

**BELOW:** 107 Command – Day 2



### Lt. Colin White, Tanker 17

I got a telephone call at work asking me if I heard about the big fire in Lake Echo and during the phone call Engine 18 was paged out. On the way to the station I found out they needed our tanker to respond to the scene.

While driving tanker 17, I was told by command to meet up with E-18 on the 107. They had gotten to the 107 earlier and were on the far side of the fire. But by the time we got there the fire had crossed the highway.

A cement truck that had made it through the fire coming from the other way was partly on fire at the side of the road and the driver was putting it out with his truck water hose. When we saw the cement truck, I was told not to try to get to E-18 because our own truck would be in danger of also catching fire.

I then met up with Dist. Captain MacNeill on the 107 and some other tankers and we started making our way to Candy



**KITTY RESCUE – Divisional Capt. Dave Meldrum takes one last look at this home on Candy Mountain Rd. before withdrawing. Because there was a solid escape route, Meldrum, Mike Harlow of E-3 and John Giggey of FeedLine, spent about ten minutes looking for four cats in this home which was within an area that had been evacuated on the second day of the fire. They only found one. However the home was spared anyway.**

Mountain Rd. Some of us were knocking on doors and telling people to get out as we went up the road.

We wanted to get as close to the fire as we could, and that was at the top of Shoreline Dr. We were trying to come up with a plan on how to fight this thing and how to do it safely.

At this point I was using my front monitor to wet down areas around some homes. (Tanker 17 has a pump and roll function.) All I could see out the windshield was black smoke and flames 50 feet in the air coming at us fast. With the conditions we faced and the resources we had, we determined it was not safe and pulled back.



**Members and units await assignments at the staging area in Mineville.**



**NICE TRY (above)** – Members from various units wait on the Leslie Rd. as an excavator rebuilds part of an old logging road. The plan was to start a tanker shuttle to the fire front a kilometre away. But a quick recon of the road determined it would be unsuitable for tankers.



**WATER COMING (below)** — Station 23 (Chezzetcook) members look after one of the water supplies on Highway 7. Deputy Chief Joe Mannette and FF Crystal Crowell are at left.





**CLOSE CALL** – During the first evening, the fire destroyed two homes and advanced right to the property lines of several others. In this picture taken on Candy Mountain Rd., a car in the driveway and a garage with a pickup inside were both destroyed. But the house sustained only heat damage to the siding.



**STOPPING IT HERE** – Members go after a large hot spot that threatened to cross Candy Mountain Rd. during the second day of the fire.



**CHOW TIME** – Mayor Peter Kelly breaks for a packaged chicken dinner with some of the troops. The mayor cancelled about 30 weekend engagements to spend time with emergency workers and people displaced by the fire. From left are the mayor; Marchetta Jamieson, Myles Faulkner, Dave Clement and Collin MacLean, all of Logistics; and Billy Dunn and Ken Brunt of Eastern Shore Search and Rescue.



*"I've never seen a group working that hard and being that efficient having that much fun."*

*Chief Director Bill Mosher*

**THE SUPPORT TEAM** – From finding heavy equipment to feeding the troops, no extended operation could be successful without Logistics. The crew, under Divisional Chief Dave Smith, and Divisional Chief Chris Charron before that, has been praised many times by our members. But they truly outdid themselves at this fire, while also supporting a second serious forest fire burning at the same time on the Peggy's Cove Rd. (*coming up in the May\_June edition*). Chief Charron, whose duties are now focused on buildings, also joined the crew to help with support. From left are Divisional Capt. Dave Clement, Wendell Eisan, Marchetta Jamieson, DC Smith, Myles Faulkner and Collin MacLean. Missing from the photo are Norman Lavoie and Mike Purcell.



**OUR NEIGHBOURS** – There were also volunteers from outside HRM assisting at the fire. Here members from Lantz pose for a photo at staging. From left are Jeremy Lanthier, Evan Mosher, Mark Frizzell and Bruce Lanthier.

# From The Community





June 17/08

Roy Mollett:-

It is with our deepest sincerity that we extend our most heartfelt thanks to you, Staff & Volunteers for their tireless effort in helping us through our ordeal with the forest fire of June/08.

Wharizym & David Freis

Sparky & Autumn-Joy

72 Rosebank Lane

Lawrenceville, GA 30046





**A NEWSLETTER  
DEDICATED TO  
MEMBERS OF HALIFAX  
REGIONAL FIRE &  
EMERGENCY**

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REMEMBER this is  
your Newsletter!  
Articles, comments and  
photographs are most  
welcome!



**Halifax Regional  
Fire & Emergency**

The call went out  
To women and men  
To fight this blaze  
From beginning to end

They fought by day  
They fought by night  
They fought in dense smoke  
Where there was no light

They fought it from air  
They fought it from ground  
When the fire flared up  
They'd knock it back down

All the communities know  
How lucky we are  
To have hero's like you  
From near and afar

So thank you, thank you  
All volunteers and personnel  
For saving our homes  
From a fiery hell

To say thank you and in appreciation of being able to write this from our own home, which many spent hours to save.

*Jim Crocker*  
138 Shoreline Dr.  
Mineville



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