

Canada mourns two wildfire fighter deaths



Two firefighters died in the line of duty while battling separate wildfires.

The B.C. Wildfire Service said this weekend that 19-year-old firefighter Devyn Gale had died on Thursday, July 13, while tackling the blaze near Revelstoke.

In a statement, Revelstoke RCMP said she had been clearing bush in a remote area where a fire had started. She lost contact with her team and was discovered caught under a fallen tree. First aid was administered and she was airlifted to a hospital where she succumbed to her injuries.

In a tribute on their Facebook page, the B.C. Wildfire Service said:

‘Devyn Gale was an initial attack crew member out of the Columbia Fire Zone in Revelstoke. She was a trusted colleague, a loving friend, a beloved sibling and a cherished daughter. She personified the iconic Reds and Blues of wildland firefighting in British Columbia: she was bravery, grit, hard work, determination, leadership and selflessness.

‘She was one of us. She was the heart of us.

‘It is hard to articulate the connectedness of a community like ours. We work shoulder to shoulder for long hours in extremely challenging circumstances. Those experiences change you, they connect you, they sustain you.

‘On Thursday night we learned we had lost one of our own.’

N.W.T. firefighter mourned

Also this weekend, the Government of Northwest Territories announced that a firefighter had died on Saturday, July 15, while battling wildfires near Fort Liard, close to the border with British Columbia. Officials have not named the firefighter, but Environment and Climate Change Minister Shane Thompson issued the following statement:

‘I am deeply saddened by the news that a Fort Liard firefighter has passed away from an injury sustained while fighting a wildfire near their community on Saturday afternoon.

'My thoughts are with their family, friends, and colleagues during this unimaginable tragedy.

'I have spoken with the family to express my grief and to emphasize what a tremendous loss this is for everyone who knew them and for the community of Fort Liard.

'Firefighters across the territory have my utmost respect for their continued efforts to protect our homes and our communities while facing such extreme conditions.

'This has already been a very challenging season for NWT firefighters, with wildfires starting earlier than normal and within reach of our communities and other critical infrastructure.

'I commend all of our firefighters for their commitment to protect our communities and other items of value. Their dedication to their work and by extension, our protection, does not go unnoticed ' but also makes this loss even more painful.

'To think that one of our own firefighters was lost protecting their own community is incredibly saddening.

'I want to send my deepest condolences to all those affected by this tragedy. I share your deep sorrow at this loss.'

Prime minister sends condolences

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau offered condolences to the families of the firefighters.

'I'm incredibly saddened by the news from the Northwest Territories, that another firefighter has lost their life battling wildfires,' Trudeau tweeted Sunday. 'To their family, their friends, and those they were heroically serving alongside: Canadians are keeping you in our thoughts. We're here for you.'

On Friday, he tweeted: 'The news from British Columbia ' that one of the firefighters bravely battling wildfires has lost her life ' is heartbreaking. At this incredibly difficult time, I'm sending my deepest condolences to her family, her friends, and her fellow firefighters.'

Source: Canadian Forest Industries