



The benefit of multi-country study tours: A history of the relationship between Australia, New Zealand and North America

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ABSTRACT – In 2014 a group of 11 fire managers from North America spent three weeks on a study tour to explore the interworking of the fire programs in Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of this tour was to give the participants from all countries a greater understanding of other countries' fire challenges as well as methods to help solve those problems. During the tour the fire managers had an opportunity to share ideas, foster cooperation, and to discuss trending issues in fire in both countries. The experience in Australia and New Zealand provided a new vision and enthusiasm that moved the fire managers to propose changes that in turn helped strengthen the fire programs in their home countries. The relationship between the North American Fire Management Working Group (FMWG) and the Forest Fire Management Group (FFMG) of Australasia was the catalyst of creating the first study tour. These groups have fostered a relationship over the last 50 years that has led to the exchange of information by sending fire managers to each other's countries. Building relationships first is the key to a successful study tour on the ground. The history of that relationship will be explored during the presentation. The presentation will also describe the steps each country has taken to enhance the study tour experience and explain some of the major outcomes from each the study tours. One of these outcomes has been the adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) from the United States to Australia and New Zealand. This one outcome has opened up the ability to share fire resources in each other countries. Finally the participants will hear about best practices and the challenges when developing relationships with other countries. Taking the lessons learned from the relationships between the FMWG and the FFMG and the history of over 10 study tours will help participants understand the process, encourage participants to start on the path to build strategic partnerships and create their own multi-country study tour.

Keywords: NIMS, FMWG, FFMG, study tour