# Norwegian Fire Managers Visit Trinity Ridge Fire Camp

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The National Interagency Fire Center recently hosted two Norwegian government officials. Ole Kristian Aagaard, District Commander for Civil Defense for Sør Trøndelag (South Trøndelag County) and Torbjørn Mæhlumsveen, Chief of the Trøndelag Inter-Municipal Fire Department, joined interagency fire managers to see firsthand how the Incident Command System works in the United States. Back home in Norway, the civil service is very different than here in the United States. As a smaller country with 5 million people, emergency responses to natural and human-caused events and disasters are undertaken at a local level. Townships and counties form their own response teams and there is no equivalent to the National Incident Management System (NIMS). There are no interagency management teams that can form a nationwide cohesive strategy in response to an emergency. But in an effort to better understand how a country like the United States undertakes the national response to events such as wildland fire, Ole and Torbjørn visited the National Interagency Fire Center here in Boise.

Together, we traveled to the Trinity Ridge Fire in Featherville, Idaho, with BLM Public Affairs Specialist Ken Frederick, USFS Public Affairs Specialist Jennifer Jones, USFS Researcher David Seesholtz, and BLM Executive Administrative Assistant Toni Rohm. We visited the fire camp and toured the Incident Command Post (ICP). Public information officers discussed the role of providing information to the public, the media, ICS personnel and firefighters. They showed us around to the various sections and we saw how a well-functioning ICP works under the NIMS. Ole and Torbjørn said the ICP was an overwhelming experience. The size and complexity of the operation was something they had not seen before. To watch it firsthand was an entirely new learning experience.

The day we visited, burnout operations were taking place to protect the town of Featherville. We travelled north to view this operation and saw helicopters work efficiently, hauling water to help contain the rate of spread. When I asked Torbjørn if they had operations like this in Norway, he told me that wildfire is rare. Rainfall mixed with colder temperatures make large fire incidents uncommon.

Wildland fire may be uncommon in Norway, but there were many important lessons to take home. As part of NIMS, their visit to the fire near Featherville showed a small, yet important aspect of the overall National Response Framework. This is a model that is used for all incidents; from natural disasters to wildland fires to chemical spills and terrorist attacks. Since Norway responds to incidents at the local level and has no national response system in place, this visit to Boise helped Ole and Torbjørn gain a perspective on responding at several levels, at understanding the different levels of command, how resources are shared, and how decisions are made.