

# MERRITT FIRE ZONE OFFICE AND PROVINCIAL WILDFIRE TRAINING CENTRE

**LOCATION**

Merritt, British Columbia

**SIZE**

1,332 m<sup>2</sup>

**COMPLETION**

2013

**ARCHITECT**

Kasian Architecture Interior  
Design & Planning Ltd.

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER**

Bush Bohlman & Partners

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

Mierau Contractors Ltd.

**PROJECT OWNER**

Ministry of Forests, Lands and  
Natural Resource Operations

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Merritt Fire Zone is one of seven fire zones that make up the Kamloops Fire Centre. It is the largest fire suppression zone in the province, responding to an average of 92 wildfires annually.

The new facility, with a floor area of 1,332 square metres, houses an expanded Merritt Fire Zone office and the Provincial Wildfire Training Centre. It provides space for up to 58 staff, storage areas for firefighting equipment and three classrooms to support field training.

The architects worked closely with key stakeholders to design a facility that now offers crucial hands-on training and assessment of firefighting recruits, who can now develop their skills in conditions similar to those encountered in the field. The zone offices are also used as a strategic operations base for out-of-province personnel during extreme wildfire seasons.

The building is arranged in three connected wings that form an open-ended courtyard. The courtyard functions as an outdoor training facility, a community gathering place for First Nations crew members, and provides shelter from the strong westerly prevailing winds. There is also a commercial kitchen which helps feed the many fire crew members during the peak wild fire season.

Construction crews broke ground on the project in October 2012 after a design period of only six months, and the building was completed at the end of August 2013. Since its completion, the facility has greatly improved the Wildfire Management Branch's fire suppression and monitoring capabilities within the Merritt Fire Zone.



Photo courtesy of Ema Peter

*“By building this project with wood, it has supported our local economy and added to the local mills ability to keep residents working. Wood is a renewable, natural, sustainable product that is visually appealing, warm and inviting. And the new centre is definitely that.”*

*Susan Roline, Mayor of Merritt*

## WOOD USE

The two-storey structure is a combination of glulam post and beam and light wood-frame construction. Built on a slab on grade, the structural framing consists of a glulam post and beam system, with engineered wood trusses and cross laminated timber (CLT) for the roof and canopy decking.

The exposed canopy structure, as well as the beams and soffits of the roof overhangs, complement the rest of the building exterior which is finished with a profiled metal cladding. Much of the glulam and CLT structure is also exposed within the building. Interior partitions and shear walls are of light wood-frame construction.

The exposed structure and naturally stained members are a major component in the aesthetic of the building; however, wood was also chosen based on a number of practical considerations. These included local availability and the ease with which wood could achieve the desired long spans and substantial roof overhangs. The flexibility of wood construction and the short delivery times for materials also helped to ensure that the project could be completed within the tight construction schedule.



*Photos courtesy of Ema Peter*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This profile is published by Forestry Innovation Investment, the Government of British Columbia's market development agency for forest products.

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