

SITREP 5, December 7, 2009

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Written at WAIS Divide

Despite early season weather delays, we are quickly gaining headway on our schedule. Expect drilling by end of week Dec-7-11.

I. ICE CORE PROGRESS

- A. The core handling team worked non-stop since arriving 11 days ago to get ice flown out before the sea-ice runway at McMurdo closed on December 4th, due to diminishing sea ice strength. The pay-back for this effort is that ground transport from the airplane to the freezer vans in McMurdo is considerably shorter and less bumpy from the sea ice runway than from Pegasus field- which we will use for all subsequent ice shipments this season. We have missed some flights due to weather and mechanical delays, but have mostly lucked out on ice flights. This last week we were able to pack and ship 4 Air Force Pallets (AFPs) of ice (512 tubes) that went out on two separate cold-deck LC-130 flights to the sea ice runway. We have discovered how to expedite 3 AFPs on a single cold-deck flight with no compromise to the ice, and will have 3 pallets ready to go out on Monday December 7th, flights and weather permitting. After this we will focus on setting up the logging stations and preparing for receiving ice core from the drillers. The goal-oriented core handling crew is becoming a well oiled machine and is good spirits.
- B. (Update: The remaining 3 AFPs successfully left WAIS Divide Monday night (local time). All ice from last season is now in McMurdo waiting to be shipped back to the USA.)

II. DRILLING PREPARATION

- A. 8 of 11 drillers are on site, and have been busy preparing the entire arch for drilling. For example, the drill slot was broadened; the casing was modified to better drain drill fluid into the hole and drip pans were extended; 3,800 meters of cable has been spooled onto the winch, and the tedious termination of the cable is underway. Drilling is expected late in the week of Dec- 7-11.

III. OTHER PROJECTS

- A. Snow pits are planned to be dug in the interim between the end of the basement ice shipments, and the beginning of drilling in the coming week, as personnel become available. Sridhar and the CReSIS team (I-189) was in town all last week, and departed (with a festive send-off) on December 5 for their seismic profile traverse, dropping our camp population from 53 to 44. The Basler MKB aircraft is currently staged at WAIS to support fuel caches for CReSIS, but has been slowed by weather and for the moment, this classic aircraft simply provides a stunning and colorful back drop to our camp. Parts for the Challenger vehicles are slowly accumulating and 2 mechanics on site are working assembling one of them. Later they will drive them to Byrd, where they will live in support of further activities.

IV. PAX MOVEMENT

- A. The Camp population is currently 44 and includes: 11 Science personnel on site (from I-477, I-478, I-168); 8 drillers (T-350); 15 camp staff; 5 science construction; 2 Challenger

mechanics; 3 Basler crew. On Monday December 7 we expect 7 PAX: 1 NICL; 3 Drillers; 2 science (A-357 magnetometer people); 1 General Assistant.

V. FUEL & EQUIPMENT

- A. Currently ~5,000 gallons of JP8 on site. All heavy equipment is functional with the exception of the snow blower attachment for the Piston Bully that is down with a mechanical problem. But, despite this, snow removal around the arch has been excellent this year and there are broad excavated areas at each end of the arch which help tremendously to reduce drifting.

VI. GENERAL

- A. Support from camp staff has been stellar, and all systems in camp are on-line, including the installation of a dish-sterilizer in the galley. At times it feels like we are a Cirque du Soleil show that requires as much set-up and take-down time as the time we get to perform. But it's a good show, and we seem to be on the eve of that part of the season when we are operating at peak production. With the exception of the efforts of a few who are working on terminating the dill cable today, most of us are taking Sunday Dec-6 off as a day of much needed rest.