



Media Release

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BELARE 2007-2008: Expedition Program and Progress

With a total of 24 people now on site, preparations on the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica site are well underway. The Russian Ivan Papanin ship carrying the 106 containers of the Princess Elisabeth Station arrived for refuelling in Cape Town, South Africa, on November 26th. It has set out for Antarctica on November 30th. The team will enter the second phase of the building plan when the ship arrives in Breid Bay in December. The estimated day of arrival is December 23rd.

Earlier in November, Alain Hubert and eight other team members landed in Utsteinen to start work on the site. At first, this included setting up the base camp and hauling back the equipment (wood, fuel,...) stored in the containers at Breid Bay. The first traverse from Breid Bay to the base camp was punctuated by a small accident when the Hammar side loader fell into a crevasse. Luckily, the sledge was hauled up and out of the crevasse in no time, thanks to the Prinoth tractors. A second trip to the coast allowed Alain to go over the snow route which had been prepared last year for the hauling of the 106 containers aboard the Ivan Papanin. This route shortens the trip between the coast and the camp by as much as 5 hours!

The building crew then moved on to identifying solid anchoring points for the station, and building the garage. They have already drilled 19 of the fifty 6-meter-deep anchoring holes in the ridge and have started fixing the steel bars of the turbines in the rock with the help of resin.

All in all, the team comprises of a medical doctor/nurse, a cooking team, qualified mountain guides and first-aid team, construction teams, a base camp management team and, during the construction phase, a driving team.

The second phase of the construction will begin in December with the arrival of the Ivan Papanin in Breid Bay. After a first stop at the Norwegian Troll Station for equipment drop-off, the Ivan Papanin will head towards Breid Bay. On board, there are two scientists researching for the Census of Antarctic Marine Life (CALM) and one artist, Geert Goris, winner of the "Grand Prix international de photographie de Vevey".

Phase Two of the construction planning will see Breid Bay secured for offloading and the containers carried across 190km to the base camp. In January, the construction of the actual station will begin (wooden and metal structures), along with the continued hauling of equipment to the base camp and the building of the wind turbines. The construction of the station's outer shell will be completed in February and joints will be sealed. Come March, the camp will be shut down and the station closed for over-wintering.

In total, the managers have planned for a total of 3809 man-hour days of work. From January on, the Utsteinen camp site will be home to no less than 38 people! By then, the construction team will dispose of two side Hammar sledges (carry containers from ground to sledge or from sledge to sledge), two cranes and four Prinoth tractors, each one able to pull three container sledges.



Background information:

www.polarfoundation.org

Princess Elisabeth project:

www.antarcticstation.org

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International Polar Foundation (IPF):

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