KEEPING BUSY WHILE WAITING FOR THE SHIP



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Since the departure of the VIPs from the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica more than two weeks ago, the BELARE team has been busy preparing for the arrival of the cargo ship, which contains the components of the station's new water treatment system, and finishing upgrades to the hangar at Perseus Intercontinental Runway.

Last week a team of eight headed toward the coast. Four team members, led by one of our engineers, performed maintenance on automatic weather stations along the PEACE project transect to the coast, while four others, including Expedition Leader Alain Hubert, went to the edge of the ice to prepare for the docking of the cargo ship.

This weather station is part of a network of five sites that will gather weather and climate data over the next ten years. These data are open-access and can be used for any scientific purpose (climate models, glaciology..etc).

Due to bad weather, the four working on the automatic weather stations had to head back to the station after the maintenance, while the four at the coast have had to wait out the bad weather for several days in a mobile living container unit, sleeping in tents next to it, as they wait for the ship to arrive. While they can see the ship off in the distance, the bad weather and poor sea ice conditions continue to delay the ship's arrival.

Alain and his team hope the ship can moor by the end of the week so they can start offloading cargo and start bringing it to the station. Back at PEA, a team of engineers and plumbers are waiting to get started on assembling the new water treatment system. They aim to accomplish as much as possible before the team has to leave in mid-February. They plan to continue with the installation of the new water treatment system at the beginning of next season.

In addition to components of the water treatment system, additional food supplies and equipment for the station will also arrive. There's so much cargo to bring back to the station that it will take two traverses using Prinoth tractors. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate!

In the meantime, engineer Johan Demuylder has been installing new solar photovoltaic units at PEA and on a mobile power unit (a converted shipping container) that will provide power to the hangar at Perseus Intercontinental Runway. The team at PEA is also preparing a mobile bathroom container for Perseus. Once Johan has finished putting the solar panels up, Tom Sage-Segard and Simeon Polet will bring the mobile power unit to Perseus, where they will finish their work upgrading the hangar to make it a liveable space.

By the end of this season, the hangar at Perseus Intercontinental Runway will have bedrooms, a kitchen, an office, and dry toilets.