

# CALGARY HERALD

PROUDLY CALGARY SINCE 1883

By Eric Volmers, Calgary Herald June 26, 2013



Calgary, Alberta: June 24, 2013 -- Flooded sets of the AMC western Hell on Wheels. (Courtesy, Bill Ives, Handout) For Entertainment section story by Eric Volmers.

Photograph by: Courtesy, Bill Ives , Handout

The first order of business on the ranch near Okotoks is to rebuild a road that was washed out.

“Some buildings along the Highwood and the Hell on Wheels town along the Bow have either been damaged or completely wiped away,” Oakes said. “It’s amazing how a whole bunch of tents in the middle of our set are gone, yet on either side there are still 40 tents remaining. There were two outhouses at the far end of town. Both of those outhouses were picked up and about 100 yards away, in the middle of the field, are standing upright.”

Hell on Wheels was the hardest hit of Alberta-shot productions during last week’s floods. Roughly 160 crew members, cast and extras were evacuated late Thursday afternoon.

Aerial shots taken after the flood show the town drenched in water.

While Oakes would not provide plot details, he did say that the Hell on Wheels writing room will be making changes to screenplays and hinted that the fiction could in some ways reflect the reality of the floods.

“We are changing some things,” said Oakes. “In some instances, we are embracing what we have. There’s no way the Hell on Wheels will be back to normal. Impossible. We’ve been building on this town for three years, so it’s not going to happen in two weeks. I’m going to stop short of giving away any surprises. Let’s just say we are embracing what God has given us and now running with it.”

Scripts will be tinkered with, a new road will be built and Calgary crew members will be working around the clock to rebuild the fictional railroad town of Hell on Wheels, but the third season of AMC’s western is salvageable after massive flooding from both the Bow and Highwood rivers swept over its sets last Thursday, says the show’s producer.

Chad Oakes, one of the Calgary producers of the series, said while the damage was considerable, cameras will hopefully start rolling again by July 10.

The third season is set to debut Aug. 10 on AMC.

Oakes is co-founder and co-chairman, alongside Mike Frislev, of Calgary's Nomadic Pictures. He said another TV project by Nomadic was set to scout locations this summer in High River, the town hit hardest by floods. The scouting has been cancelled for now.

Luke Azevedo, Calgary's commissioner of film, said there was at least one other project that was to scout flooded areas that has also been put on hold.

Azevedo is currently in Los Angeles selling Alberta as a location to both major and independent studios. The trip was planned before the floods in southern Alberta, but Azevedo said he still expects it to be a busy summer. Redemption, a western starring Donald and Kiefer Sutherland, is still expected to shoot near Springbank in July. Beyond that, scouting for new projects may have to wait.

"This has put a pretty big dent in production across the province, at least southern Alberta," Azevedo said. "We have to get through that before we can really make any decisions. Timing wise, we've got to be cautious."