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SITE INDEX

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- [Home Page](#)
- [News](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [The Drive](#)
- [Dining](#)
- [Urban Landscape](#)
- [City Calendar](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Restaurant Reviews](#)
- [Back Issues](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Community Links](#)
- [Contests](#)



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NEWS



BMW store technicians (l-r) Tony Kovacevic, Haydn Winter, Kris Campbell, Jason Lange and Jay Tetez will be flying on a wing and a prayer come Aug. 19. Photo-Dan Toulgoet

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Flugtag not just a flight of fancy for local trailer park boys

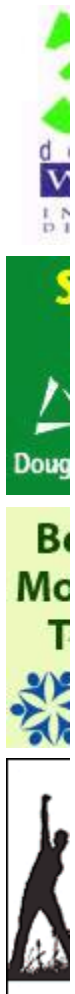
By Sandra Thomas-Staff writer

A week tomorrow, BMW technician Jason "Bubbles" Lange plans to climb into a homemade flying machine made of little more than thin strips of metal and pieces of Styrofoam and launch himself over False Creek.

Lange and his teammates, all service technicians at the BMW Store at Burrard and West Fifth Avenue, make up one of 30 teams chosen out of 200 applying across Canada for the Red Bull Flugtag, Aug. 19. During flugtag, which is German for "flying day," the teams will launch homemade flying machines over, and possibly into, False Creek.

Lange was chosen as pilot because he is the smallest of the team, which includes Jay "J-Rock" Tetz, Hayden "Ricky" Winter, Kris "Cory" Campbell and Tony "Julian" Kovacevic. Fans of the comedy TV series Trailer Park Boys will recognize their nicknames as the show's main characters. The idea for their machine, dubbed Bubbles Rocket Brigade, was inspired by an episode of the show.

"It's the one where Bubbles starts building a space centre and covers everything with tinfoil," said Lange. "Besides being a lot of fun this is an awesome opportunity for us to work as a team."



The BMW Store's owner Rick Bultitude, who is letting them use the service department to build their craft, sponsored the team.

Tetz says they decided to take part in the event after the promotional Red Bull Girls-think Budweiser Girls-stopped by the dealership about two months ago as the young men were taking a break outside the service department.

"And they've been stopping by to check up on us once a week since then," said Winter.

Though this is the first time Red Bull is hosting a Flugtag in Canada, there have been 35 such events around the world from Ireland to Israel. Teams taking part in the mostly Canadian competition are traveling from as far away as Moncton, N.B, and Quebec City to join local teams. Themes for the homemade flying machines are eclectic to say the least, with names such as Acadian Supper, which is shaped like a lobster, the self-described Poutine Wagon, and the Last Saskatchewan Elevator, which is shaped like a grain elevator. Some Vancouver-based entrants include Sushi Gone Wild, a combination of giant chopsticks, wasabi dish and raw fish; the Ballerz Club Ghetto Club, which looks like a giant ghetto blaster; and the Free Moustache Rides, inspired by Tom Selleck from the 1980s TV series Magnum P.I. Other entrants of note include Back to the Flugtag, The Wrong Brothers and Zam Bull Ni.

Team Air Guitar from Calgary not only plans to fly its homemade craft, but also wants the entire audience to pretend to play the guitar in unison. The team hopes to establish a new world record by having thousands of people play air guitar at the same time.

And as zany as the event might look, it has rules. Flying machines must be entirely human powered, less than nine-metres wide and weigh no more than 200 kilograms, including the pilot.

Teams are judged on the distance their craft travels, creativity and showmanship. Each team also has two minutes to perform an original skit before pushing, dragging and launching their crafts. The Flugtag flight record of 195 feet was set in Austria in 2000.

The first place winner of the event receives a pilot training course, second place wins skydiving lessons, and third place wins paragliding lessons. Prizes will also be awarded for most creative craft and people's choice.

Gates open at noon next Saturday and the first flight takes off from the north side of False Creek near the Plaza of Nations at 2 p.m. The event is free.

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[back to top](#)

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