

# On Scene



FOR PARTNERS IN FIRE AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

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MLAs tour Government Emergency Operations Centre

## Agency provides emergency management tours for Alberta MLAs

**U**NDERSTANDING THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) is best conducted through visual exposure to the agency's two core units:

- the Government Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC)
- the Agency Response Readiness Centre (ARRC).

"Walking tours through the GEOC and ARRC increase awareness about and understanding of the role and responsibilities of the agency," commented Colin Lloyd, Executive Director, Planning and Operations, Alberta Emergency Management Agency. "In addition to seeing the physical operation at work, it also actualizes the activities that take place during an agency response."

Under the personal leadership of Minister Ray Danyluk to help Alberta MLAs gain a sense of the complexities of the agency and what happens during a crisis or disaster, the agency has started providing walking tours for them.

The AEMA supports municipalities and first responders by helping to coordinate resources during an emergency through the GEOC, which is only activated in times of emergency or disaster.




From Left:  
**Minister Ray Danyluk;**  
**Evan Berger,** Livingstone Macleod MLA;  
**Colin Lloyd,** Executive Director, Planning and Operations, AEMA;  
**Ken Allred,** St. Albert MLA; **Greg Weadick,** Lethbridge West MLA.

"The GEOC allows communities to access all types of government resources and support that they otherwise would not have access to," added Lloyd. "For example, the GEOC was activated last June when a breached pipeline spilled crude oil into the Red Deer River, which feeds Gleniffer Lake about five kilometres north of Sundre.

Through the GEOC, a cross-government response to the spill was organized, which included information sharing among affected departments, agencies and municipalities. The government took action to mitigate the impact of the leak and contain the spill. Later, work was done to recover the area and restore the lake. The Gleniffer spill was an excellent example of the government working with municipalities and emergency responders to enhance the response effort.

The government monitors the province for these types of emergencies through the ARRC, which provides 24-hour, seven-days-a-week communication support to government and emergency responders. Information provided by the ARRC helps everyone work together and share resources to respond to emergency events.

"The tours help elected representatives better understand what happens in a large scale emergency. Most importantly, that information also helps them better serve their constituents," stated Lloyd. "The more people who understand what goes on in an emergency response, the better able we are to respond to the situation." 

This is the second issue of *On Scene*.  
Let us know what you think, write to:  
[aema@gov.ab.ca](mailto:aema@gov.ab.ca)

Alberta

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From the Managing Director of AEMA

# Mitigation in Alberta

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (Second Edition) defines the term “mitigate” as “to make milder or less intense, or severe; moderate or give relief from.” In a similar vein, the Canadian Standards Association (Z1600-08) notes that “mitigation” involves action taken to reduce risks and impacts posed by hazards before an emergency or disaster occurs. The Alberta Emergency Plan clearly delineates prevention/mitigation as a key component in the emergency management framework by noting that prevention/mitigation is aimed at eliminating or reducing the impacts and risks of hazards through the utilization of proactive measures before an emergency or disaster occurs. These proactive measures may include land use management, public education and the construction of protective structures such as flood dykes. By adding the prevention/mitigation component to the traditional focus on preparedness and response, emergency managers will assist in the prevention of disasters and/or the reduction of social, economic and damage costs when events do occur.

In its role of leading the coordination, collaboration and cooperation of all organizations involved in the prevention, preparedness and response to disaster and emergencies, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency pays particular attention to the role of mitigation services to the government, to Albertans, to their communities and to industry with respect to the protection of people, their property and the environment from the effects of emergency events. Examples supporting the mitigation effort can be found as follows.

1. The Agency Response Readiness Centre provides an e-mailed “Daily Situation Report” to over 1,100 recipients in order to keep all well aware of emerging/continuing/concluding situations-of-interest in the Alberta region.
2. Programs and services such as: a best practices listing; business continuity consultation for government departments



Dave Hodgins

and related entities; consultations and workshops for the purpose of stakeholder communication, emergency management planning, emergency management system (partners) collaboration, Emergency Public Warning System enhancement; and discussions on the Alberta Fire and Rescue

Services Leadership Model/Analysis.

3. Public education and awareness programs/services are aimed at increasing everyone’s knowledge, thus enhancing safe attitudes and behaviours. Examples of agency programs/services in this area include Burn Awareness Week (Feb 1-7), Emergency Preparedness Week (May 3-9), Fire Prevention Week (October 4-10), Alberta Home Winter Fire Safety, Agency Audio Visual Library, Children’s Fire Safety, Risk Watch, education programs, education resource materials, fire safety publications, safety/fact tip sheets, Getting to Know Fire and fire safety programs for older adults.
4. The agency training program and related services are designed to support the Alberta Emergency Management System through the development and provision of standards for emergency management exercises and training, a contact list of approved trainers for use with activities supported by the Emergency Management Grant Training Initiative and provision of training through direct delivery by agency training officers, grant funded training as well as collaboration in service provision with the Canadian Emergency Management College and the Alberta Fire Emergency Training Centre.
5. The agency is actively involved in the development and enhancement of the emergency alerting systems functioning in the province.

Forewarned is forearmed ...and forearmed is “a Province Prepared.” 

**E. David Hodgins** CEM, S.B.St.J.  
*Managing Director,  
Alberta Emergency Management Agency*



## Large scope initiative underway

A working group focused on a very important issue that affects the fire and emergency management community across Canada – and beyond – is making good progress.

The Joint Firefighter Recruitment Initiative working group was created as a collaborative effort between the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA). It is comprised of 20 members representing the broad spectrum of the fire service across Alberta, including volunteer, part time and paid, First Nations and Métis as well as representatives from the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta

Association of Municipal Districts and Counties. The working group is co-chaired by Trent West, Alberta Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training, AEMA and Brian McEvoy, Bonnyville Fire Department Fire Chief and AFCA President.

To date, the group has finalized its terms of reference and is now focused on developing the work plan and resources necessary for this large undertaking.

“This initiative is much more than a fire service issue,” said Brian McEvoy. “It is something that is affecting many diverse organizations in Alberta, across Canada and beyond. At its very essence, we need to

look at volunteerism in general and what is happening there.”

Trent West added, “the long spiral of volunteerism, and especially recruitment and retention, has been happening for years. It is impossible to reverse the spiral in a matter of months. Our working group doesn’t want a quick fix. What we want is to make sure that the work we do is done correctly and done right. Our end result is to create a product that is valuable to the personnel in emergency management.”

The group has applied for grant funding to obtain the necessary resources.

Ongoing updates about the working group will be provided in future issues of *Alberta On Scene*. 🔥

### Agency executive team to travel the province

## Building on successful stakeholder relation initiatives

BY FRED TYRRELL, Manager, Stakeholder Relations

*A sandwich has two pieces of bread on the outside, and the really good stuff on the inside!*

In March 2008, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency experimented with a new pilot approach to gaining access to key human resources from within the Government of Alberta by entering into a 15-month secondment contract that saw a new Stakeholder Relations Unit created and led by a manager “on loan” from another department. The first major project of this rookie unit was to take the full executive team on a 14 community road trip to meet with their emergency management partners from the municipal sector.

The feedback generated during these sessions did exactly what a true facilitation process is intended to do, and that is to

influence the direction of the organization. Many of the initiatives and approaches taken since last spring can be traced directly back to input given by the municipal partners at these community meetings.

Following the success of that initiative, late spring 2009 has the agency’s new executive team travelling around the province. And the seconded manager? His final initiative with the agency is organizing meetings in 16 communities across the province, built around the existing relationships that so strongly exist between the agency’s field officers and the full spectrum of emergency partners. Invited participants include municipalities, industry, First Nations and Metis communities, provincial government services and the not-for-profit sector. 🔥

“Many of the initiatives and approaches taken since last spring can be traced directly back to input given by the municipal partners at these community meetings.”

Watch for details announcing the dates and locations of these meetings, call your local field officer, or contact the agency by telephone at 780-422-9000.

# Diligently tracking Alberta's concerns

**T**HE EXPANDING RESPONSIBILITIES of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) have resulted in many changes and additions. To give our readers a better understanding of the work of the agency, we will be providing an overview of the various branches. In the first of this series, we highlight the work of the Risk, Plans and Consequence Management Branch.

Under the direction of Colin Blair, Director of Risk, Plans and Consequence Management program of AEMA, he and a team of seven staff are charged with a very important responsibility – ensuring that the Government of Alberta is prepared for any disaster or emergency situation. Their areas of responsibility include coordination with Government of Alberta ministries, federal partners,


*“The provincial hazards are anything that can impact our province.”*

Non-Government Organizational Council and business continuity support to ministries.

The provincial hazards are anything that can impact our province. Some are season dependant, such as flooding, forest wildfires and tornados. Others could be communicable diseases such as pandemic influenza or the West Nile virus or other potentially devastating concerns such as

foot and mouth disease, pest infestations or severe weather and fire safety.

As part of its emergency readiness, this branch plays a critical role in staffing key positions in the Government Emergency Operations Centre, developing and keeping up-to-date on a broad range of emergency plans, which include petroleum industry incident support, major air disaster, consequence management critical pest infestation response, dangerous goods support, foreign animal disease eradication support and Government of Alberta business continuity. Staff are also involved with a myriad of other activities such as the national emergency supply system, IT business continuity, power outage plan and emergency preparedness week.

A tall order, yes, but one that staff are attentively and enthusiastically committed about. 

## AEMA update

# Leading the campaign of mitigation

BY FRED TYRRELL, Manager, Stakeholder Relations

Now that we're about half way through the spring flood season, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is preparing for the onslaught of summer thunderstorms. It is interesting to see how an organization copes with the present and prepares for the future. If the organization is not willing to flex or be open to doing things in a new way, then often the consequences of the future can be very painful. Perhaps this suggests that an organization should focus on three stages and include the past as well as the present and the future.

The past can be a great teacher as long as the student is open to learning the lessons revealed to it. While Alberta has not had a great many catastrophic emergencies (in the old days, we would have called them disasters) there have been enough events for our emergency managers to have learned some key lessons.

What we have learned must then be applied to bring about change. Current activities of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency have been shaped by the past. But, how far back IS the past? Last decade, last year, or yesterday? Author Peter Drucker has an interesting perspective that he shared in his book in the mid-1990s where he writes:

*“...one cannot make decisions for the future. Decisions are commitments to action. And actions are always in the present, and in the present only. But actions in the present are also the one and only way to make the future.”*

The actions of the past and the actions of the present are what shape the future.

So how can we reduce the impact of critical incidents on Albertans? How can we lead in the campaign of mitigation? Key to this is the aspect of understanding risk.

Consequences must either be known or anticipated before any effective planning can occur. Then change must happen!

There has been a great deal of change within the agency since it was created. It has been buffeted by forces both internal to government and outside of government. But, more importantly, it has been led by people with knowledge and experience, inspired by their passion for their profession. Change has not always been easy, either to lead or to accept. But to truly be the leader of the emergency management system in Alberta, the agency must model this attribute. The agency is, and must remain, a dynamic and flexible organization that changes in response to need and then moves ahead.

That is what leadership requires to move into a better future. 

# Making progress on a number of fronts

BY BILL PURDY, Executive Director, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association

The change in name for the publication known as *Alberta Fire News* will be well accepted by Alberta fire services. *Alberta On Scene* is more reflective of the role of the fire service across Alberta, which is very different from the day of fire prevention and extinguishment. While fire departments continue to provide fire prevention, we now provide medical emergency first responders assistance, dangerous goods and hazardous materials and various rescues, including high angle, water and ice, motor vehicle collisions and personal assist.

Chief Randy Wolsey, who retired from Edmonton Fire and Rescue on February 1, 2009, was an active member of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) and Board. Randy's wisdom and no-nonsense

approach will be missed. The AFCA wishes him the best in his retirement. The AFCA is also looking forward to a strong working relationship with Edmonton's new chief, Ken Block. Ken has accepted a position representing the AFCA on the Safety Codes Council (Building Technical Council), subject to acceptance by the Safety Council Board. Ken will also be representing Edmonton Fire and Rescue on the newly-established working group on regulations under the *Emergency Health Act*.

Since my last update in *Alberta On Scene*, and as indicated above, the AFCA Board established a working group to work with Alberta Health in developing regulations under the *Emergency Health Act*. The regulations will include first responders, air ambulance and dispatch. The members of

the working group are executive members of the Board – President Brian McEvoy, Vice President Brian Cornforth, Vice President Peter Krish, Secretary Treasurer Cammie Laird, Executive Director Bill Purdy, Edmonton Fire and Rescue Fire Chief Ken Block, Calgary Fire Services Deputy Chief Len MacCharles, Spruce Grove Fire Chief Robert Kosterman and High River Fire Chief Len Zebedee. This process should be concluded by late summer. The working group will be providing input to Alberta Health. 

For more information, please contact Bill Purdy, Executive Director, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association  
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## High Intensity Residential Fire working group update

# Taking action to reduce high intensity residential fires

**A** YEAR IN THE MAKING, the final report of the High Intensity Residential Fire (HIRF) working group was released in March 2009. The report was the culmination of 18 recommendations provided by the HIRF working group to the Government of Alberta about ways to reduce the incidence and impact of major residential fires.


The government committed to take action to:

- increase public education to give Albertans information to prevent fires
- improve the fire code to help prevent arson and to promote workplace safety
- update the building code to enhance fire safety requirements for homes built closely together.

Following the working group's report, several affected organizations were asked to analyze the recommendation and provide information on the effects of the proposed changes. The representatives included the fire service, municipal governments, home builders, land developers and safety codes administrators.

*“The report was the culmination of 18 recommendations provided by the HIRF working group to the Government of Alberta about ways to reduce the incidence and impact of major residential fires.”*

When the report was released, Alberta Municipal Affairs

began a public information campaign of newspaper and radio advertisements to inform the construction industry about the new codes and how they will help reduce the effects of HIRF. 

For a copy of the full report or information about the public education campaign, visit [www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca)



# Mobile Environmental Emergency Operations in Alberta

BY MARTIN KREZALEK, Emergency Response Officer, Community Spill Response Program Coordinator, Alberta Environment Support and Emergency Response Team

**T**HE ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT SUPPORT AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (ASERT) is dedicated to providing leadership in environmental emergency management, assuring the health of Albertans and their environment across Alberta. Although ASERT engages emergency response partners and stakeholders in advance of an emergency event, many relationships

are initially founded at the field level when responding to an incident at a mobile operations centre, command post or over the hood of a response vehicle.

Effective and efficient emergency management across the over 650,000 square kilometres of Alberta's diverse geographic landscape is a significant challenge. Alberta Environment employs a dedicated network of staff and resources that are coordinated and managed by ASERT to address and overcome increasingly complex environmental challenges and risks.

## ASERT regional responders – critical to emergency response success

Centrally located in Edmonton, ASERT provides support, coordination and emergency response leadership to regional responders in 12 regional offices across the province. ASERT Regional Responders are on-call 24/7 and provide a critical operational first-response function, ensuring emergency response geographic coverage across Alberta. Guided by the circumstances of the emergency event,



ASERT Sprinter Mobile Operations Unit interior.



Calgary based ASERT mobile office trailer



Sprinter mobile operations unit with boom fully deployed facilitating aerial incident overview and meteorological conditions.

ASERT may deploy additional mobile operations units and resources to support regional field operations.

## ASERT Mobile Operations Units

ASERT maintains three mobile office operations units across the province. All three units were custom designed by Emergency Response Officer Shawn Ingram and are purpose built to facilitate prolonged field operations anywhere in the province. The intent of the mobile operations units is to act as a remote office; each unit is equipped with 2-3 work stations (laptop mounts, printers, administrative supplies and reference materials) with continuous power available from generators. An enhanced mobile communications platform is present in each unit for

*“This specially-equipped vehicle can provide immediate air quality “snapshots” on location.”*

air-cards, satellite phones and cell signal amplifiers supporting ancillary information technology equipment.

The ASERT flagship is the mobile emergency operations Sprinter van unit located in Edmonton.

The unit platform is a 2008 Sprinter van custom outfitted with meteorological instrumentation, 45 foot extendable mast complete with closed-circuit camera system, integrated recordable video feed direct to digital media and external panel hard-line access for multiple unit interoperability. The two mobile office units built on towable cargo trailer platforms are located in Fort McMurray and Calgary. All units have convenience amenities (coffee maker, refrigerator) and full climate control systems (heating, air conditioning), ensuring operability in any weather conditions.

## Response vehicles

Both ASERT and regional responders (regional office locations) utilize fully-outfitted response vehicles to execute initial response actions to emergencies. The emergency response vehicles are outfitted with enhanced technology platforms supporting laptop workstations with digital mapping, hazardous materials-dangerous goods reference software and digital photography, mobile-internet accessibility and global positioning. All emergency response vehicles are also outfitted with red lights and sirens to ensure a safe, prompt response to incidents where environmental and public health and safety are threatened.



ASERT Emergency Response Officer Darryl Monnette conducting incident assessment in front of the Fort McMurray based mobile officer trailer.

*“Effective and efficient emergency management across the over 650,000 square kilometres of Alberta’s diverse geographic landscape is a significant challenge.”*

## Community Spill Response Program Units

The Community Spill Response Program (as featured in OnScene Volume 30, #01) includes six spill response units co-located with program participant communities and their fire departments across Alberta. Every spill response unit is a fully outfitted 18 feet by 7 feet cargo trailer containing identical type and amount of equipment such as hard boom, sorbent materials, rope-rigging and support tools. Each spill response unit is capable of both land and water-based initial response tactics utilizing equipment contained in each unit.

## Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratory

ASERT relies on the Edmonton-based Alberta Environment Mobile Air

Monitoring Laboratory (MAML) unit as an air-monitoring resource during emergency events. This specially-equipped vehicle can provide immediate air quality “snapshots” on location. The unit carries air sampling equipment integrated with a global-positioning system, allowing it to sample at specified time or distance intervals, and analyze samples immediately. The vehicle runs with minimum emissions and power for its instruments comes from two on-board, natural gas-fired generators equipped with exhaust scrubbers. Dependent on the incident circumstances, the vehicle may obtain air quality data from warm and cold zone locations in response to emergencies where air quality may be a concern.

Alberta Environment demonstrates a strong proactive commitment to overcome challenges by proactively identifying and addressing risks and opportunities. The staff and resources dedicated to mobile emergency operations ensure that increasingly complex environmental challenges and risks can be managed. The mobile operations component of ASERT confidently ensures that effective and efficient emergency response and management can occur at any location and under any circumstances. 🔥

For more information contact the author at [martin.krezalek@gov.ab.ca](mailto:martin.krezalek@gov.ab.ca)



# Getting the scoop on new positions

Last issue we announced the appointment of two key staff of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) – Colin Lloyd as Executive Director of Planning and Operations and Trent West as Alberta Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training. Nice titles, but what do they really mean? *Alberta On Scene* decided to interview both Colin and Trent to find out why they applied for the positions and what the jobs entail.

## Interview with Colin Lloyd

### What interested you in the position of Executive Director of Planning and Operations for AEMA?

One of the things that most intrigued me about the position was that it connected and built upon the work I've done over the years on both the fire side and the emergency management side. It was also exciting to be involved in creating a new way of doing business that would enable us to assist communities in ways that we haven't previously. For me, the true excitement of the job is building a seamless operation across a broad continuum that includes everything from a vigilance mode right up to a full scale activation of the Government Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC) and then back down to evaluation of the effectiveness of our actions.

In many ways, my new position equates to the very interesting work I did working at Scotland Yard. Most importantly, it provides so many opportunities to be of service and influence for the good of Alberta's communities.

### What are the responsibilities of your new position?

There are a diverse range of responsibilities within this position, but they all relate to being prepared and providing effective responses. One of the key elements is the Agency Response Readiness Centre (ARCC), which is a major initiative that has recently been created in the agency. This 24/7 emergency decision support centre ensures that the right calls are made and the correct



Colin Lloyd

resources are provided. It's only been up and running for a year, but we've already seen a lot of success. Included with that is the Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS), which also provides the Amber Alerts. While the EPWS has worked pretty well since 1992, we're working on a brand new system modernization that will be linked to the national

system across Canada.

The GEOC is also under my responsibility. Together with the people who will operate in key positions, it needs to be prepared for activation at any time and any day of the week, from partial to full blown activation.

Another key responsibility is the continuity of the government secured through the Government of Alberta business continuity plan, which is designed to identify and rank those critical, vital and necessary government services that government must be in a position to resume in the case of a major business loss.

Other responsibilities attached to this position include overseeing hazard-specific plans such as the B.C. earthquake plan, the major air disaster plan, the Dangerous Goods Incident Support Plan as well as a variety of grant programs delivered by our 16 field officers designed to build capacity, capability and resilience for fire and emergency management for municipalities and First Nation communities.

I am also responsible for working with our federal, provincial and territorial partners on emergency management issues.

As you can see, it's a very diverse and broad portfolio, with a lot of variety. It's certainly never dull or routine!

### How many staff are employed within your section?

There are 33 staff in my area, but not all report directly to me.

### What are some of your concerns?

Given the complexity and magnitude of events around the world, I am alarmed at the low percentage of families that are properly prepared for an emergency. Add to that, the huge amount of industrial activity in Alberta, the increasing dryness, more flooding and a greater indication of power outages leads us towards a need to be more cognizant of the risks and play our part in being prepared. Quebec's major ice storms a few years ago really brought the issue to the forefront. Emergency responders anticipated the need to reach out to the elderly, frail and disadvantaged as well as those directly injured as a result of the event. What they discovered, however, was that in addition to these groups needing their assistance, many other citizens were not prepared for an emergency and required assistance as well. I hope that in Alberta we are able to encourage all citizens to take action and be prepared for any eventuality. We already promote Emergency Preparedness Week, but we need to do more to get the word out and get Albertans to take responsibility for their families during the first 72 hours of an event.

### What are your plans/goals for the future?

I want to make sure that Alberta is truly a province prepared. That's the agency motto, and that's my goal too. To do that, I need to make sure the agency is operationally ready and capable to respond to and initiate the right responses to communities in need. That includes



ensuring that the level of preparedness is woven into the culture of the agency at all levels of government too.

This will require a lot of training and exercises with government partners and partners in the emergency management system in general. We have already made

great progress on this, and will continue to expand our reach so that when an emergency occurs, people will know exactly what to do.

## Interview with Trent West

### What interested you in the position of Fire Commissioner and Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training for AEMA?

The “new” position of Fire Commissioner along with the responsibilities of Executive Director, Administration, Finance and Training presented many old as well as some new challenges with some expected outcomes as well as a new path to blaze. To me, the unknown is exciting.

### What are the responsibilities of your new position?

This position has a diverse range of responsibilities:

- The Fire Commissioner position focuses on policy and legislation while maintaining the direct contact with municipalities and industry. It also includes establishing new relationships and strengthening existing relationships.
- The Administration, Finance and Training responsibilities include overarching responsibility for the agency’s budgeting requirements and the agency’s communications initiatives, the latter coordinated through the Stakeholder Relations Branch. Responsibilities also include the delivery of research, training, accreditation and certification.
- The Safety Security Environment Institute will provide research to ensure best practices and provide procedures and systems as it best relates to an Alberta application.
- The Fire Emergency Services Training Initiative has evaluated responses from system partners and is in the process of determining what next steps will be taken to provide more robust regionally-delivered training programs. Pilot projects are underway and the outcomes are very good. Included in this area is training and accreditation, a function that is returning to the agency.

### How many staff are employed within your section?

Our division staff complement consists of an executive director, two directors, four managers and 12 operational support/training personnel.

### What are your plans/goals for the future?

In the short-term, the Fire Commissioner is co-chair with the President of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) working group on recruitment and retention. This is one of many very important items on our plate. It also includes the Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC) report for the minister’s consideration, which includes developing FSAC function and structure, the Safety Codes Act review and a High Intensity Residential Fire (HIRF) public awareness campaign.



Trent West

Longer-term goals include the development of new relationships among emergency system partners and the province. Implementation for the FSAC report initiatives will take some time, with some of the recommendations taking several years. Regional training


initiatives will also be long-term as there will be a need to review and adjust as best practices are identified. Strengthening the roles of the AFCA, emergency managers and the agency supporting emergency system partners are also part of the long-term plans.

### What obstacles are in your way?

My obstacles are similar to every other emergency service provider. Maintaining momentum can be a challenge, and implementing new objectives with budget constraints will be an amazing exercise and balancing act of providing services while moving to new delivery methods such as accreditation and certification. Another one is supporting fire services as the province completes the EMS transition.

### Anything else you’d like to include?

Identifying what your role is in the future of our service is the challenge we all must accept. What “it” will look like at the end of the day is definitely up to you.

“Choice not chance determines destiny,” so choose to be part of determining the future to improve the chance that our future reflects what we need it to be and not hope it turns out the way we think it should be. 

*“Longer-term goals include the development of new relationships among emergency system partners and the province. Implementation for the FSAC report initiatives will take some time...”*

# Continuing to ensure the oil and gas industry is prepared

BY MICHAEL LOUIE, Assessor, Emergency Planning and Assessment Team, Energy Resources Conservation Board

**W**HEN IT COMES TO the safety of the public and workers, emergency preparedness needs to be comprehensive and progressive. It is simply not enough to just have adequate resources and/or a plan. After all, people come and go and plans become outdated. Training of personnel and believing that plans are living trees that need regular maintenance are routine for those of us in the business of emergency planning and response.

The Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) approaches emergency preparedness with the same attitude but does so from the perspective of an industry regulator. One of the primary goals of the ERCB is to keep the public safe and it does so through its comprehensive directives, regulations and processes that it enforces on Alberta's oil and gas industry.

The current Directive 071: Emergency Preparedness and Response Requirements for the Petroleum Industry, like all of its previous versions, focuses on ensuring that companies have robust emergency response plans (ERP) and are prepared to respond in the unlikely event of a sour gas incident.

The directive is a result of extensive consultation and input from various stakeholders from all sectors including the general public, municipal governments, health authorities and industry.

All required ERPs for drilling and operations that involve Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) are received by the Public Safety Field Surveillance Branch (PSFS) of the ERCB and are put through a rigorous review, audit and approval process to ensure that they meet the requirements as outlined in the directive.



However, having an ERP that meets the requirements is just one piece of a comprehensive approach to emergency preparedness. The ERCB recognizes that there is a difference between having a response plan and actually being able to implement that plan when it is needed.

Therefore, to ensure that what is written on paper is able to be properly executed or reflects what responders are actually doing during an incident, the ERCB's PSFS Branch conducts response plan assessments with a number of industry operators annually. Furthermore, the ERCB also participates and/or evaluates several full-scale mock exercises carried out by companies year round.

The ERCB's assessment of operators consists of activities such as 'ground truthing' emergency planning maps and ensuring

that emergency contact numbers provided to the public are not only operational but are answered by a company representative who is able to make a rapid and appropriate response. Assessments could also include evaluating an operator's training records and rigorously interviewing company employees who have roles in response plans to test their knowledge and ability to execute during a response. The goal of the assessments is to ensure that important response information is up-to-date and accurate, and those that are responding know their plan(s) and their respective roles.

As part of a comprehensive approach to preparedness, the ERCB also requires companies to perform a minimum of one table-top exercise each year and one full scale major exercise every third year per each sour operation. The ERCB plays an important role in these exercises by participating and/or providing objective evaluation and feedback.

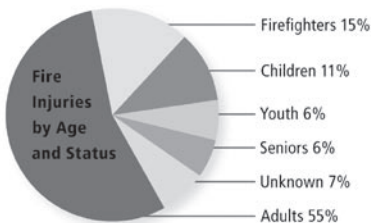
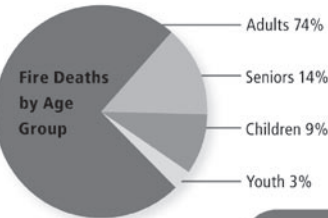
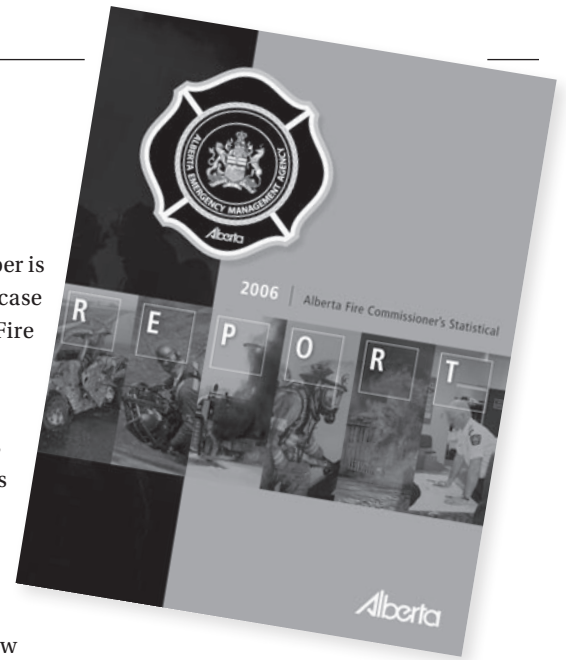
As ERPs are 'living', the ERCB's requirements must also reflect the standards of the day. The ERCB continues to work with its emergency response partners and stakeholders to promote the evolution of emergency management in Alberta. Adoption of the Incident Command System by industry, encouraging the development of regional emergency planning through consultations and partnerships with local area stakeholders and standardizing ERPs to ensure consistency and familiarity across the province are just some of the activities that the ERCB is currently involved with.

By taking the path of being comprehensive and continually looking forward with respect to emergency preparedness, the ERCB has and will continually ensure that the oil and gas industry is prepared for emergencies and thus ultimately ensure the continuing safety of Albertans. 🔥

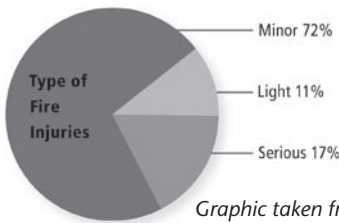
# Decreasing numbers is good news

**W**ITH TODAY'S UNSTEADY economy around the world, most decreasing numbers are bad news, but when we're

dealing with fire statistics, a lower number is actually good news. That's certainly the case with the recently released 2006 Alberta Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report.



**Seniors:** 65 years of age and older  
**Adults:** 18 - 64 years  
**Youth:** 12 - 17 years  
**Children:** 11 years and under  
**Note:** No firefighters died in 2006 fires  
*Definitions of injuries are provided in the glossary, pg. 18.*



Graphic taken from page 5 of the report.

Although Alberta's population increased, the number of fire deaths decreased slightly (35 in 2006 versus 38 in 2005) as did the Alberta fire death rate (1.1 in 2006 versus 1.2 in 2005). The number of fires and fire injuries also decreased – 2006 saw 5,120 fires and 235 injuries; 2005 saw 5,194 fires and 247 injuries. The \$ losses also decreased in 2006, by over 50 per cent!

On average, during the 10 year period 1997-2006, there were 1.1 fire deaths per 100,000 population in Alberta; 74 per cent of fire deaths occurred in residential properties. These statistics and many more are detailed in the 2006

statistical report, which is available at [www.aema.alberta.ca](http://www.aema.alberta.ca) or by calling the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) at 780-422-9000.

The numbers are a sad reminder that too many fires occur, and too many Albertans die or suffer fire-related injuries. Thankfully, home fire safety continues to be a priority for the AEMA and the fire and emergency services in Alberta. 🔥

## Cross-government symposium update

# Symposium outcomes

BY ADAM ARMITAGE, Stakeholder Relations, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

In a follow up to the "Practicing the ability to work together" article in the February 2009 issue of *Alberta On Scene*, provided below is a summary of the cross-government symposium organized by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), with the assistance of Alberta Environment and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

In total, 190 people, including field officers, support staff and managers from Edmonton, met in Edmonton on February 18, 2009.

Seven ministries provided brief presentations to refresh attendee knowledge about their areas of business and rehearse the type of complicated decisions that often

have to be made in the middle of the night when dealing with an emergency situation. The attendees were then divided into eight working groups, and given one of three scenarios to work through.

The scenarios were designed to cause jurisdictional strife between responding agencies; the group discussions affirmed that the scenarios did exactly that.

- **Scenario 1** – an unidentified sheen appearing on a remote creek
- **Scenario 2** – a leaking or sabotaged well-head that had impacted wildlife
- **Scenario 3** – a wildfire that was going to impact a municipality in the next 24 hours.

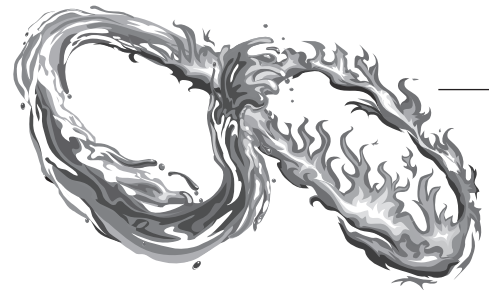
Jurisdictional blurring occurs whenever there is uncertainty about the cause

or impact of an emergency, and is amplified by complex factors such as the uncertain nature of a chemical, ambivalent information about the cause of an emergency, or potential 'doomsday' consequences affecting entire communities.

At the end of the scenario, every group had considered the same series of questions about leadership, support and goals during an emergency. The answers generated by the groups were taken back to the agency for a final report that will include recommendations on needed next steps in enhancing the effectiveness of relationships between field staff during responses to keep Albertans safe. 🔥



# Three emergency medical services programs transferred to Lakeland College



## fire etc. LAKELAND COLLEGE emergency training centre

The University of Alberta and Lakeland College finalized an agreement on March 4, 2009 to transfer three emergency medical services (EMS) programs from the university's community education unit at the Augustana campus to Lakeland College.

Effective September 2009, new intakes of paramedic and emergency medical technician (EMT) programs will be offered by Lakeland College. These programs are offered primarily online with some days spent in class learning technical skills. The on-site portion of the programs will continue to be offered in Camrose.

"We're proud of the innovative programs that our dedicated staff team has built, particularly to serve students and communities in rural Alberta," said Roger Epp, dean of the Augustana campus. "But in our current circumstances we're convinced that Lakeland is the right long-term home for these EMS programs and that it can provide new educational advancement opportunities for graduates."

The program transfer corresponds with the Government of Alberta's recent definition of appropriate roles and mandates for public post-secondary institutions. It does not affect students already enrolled in EMS programs through the university, provided that they complete diploma requirements within the specified time period.

"The paramedic diploma and EMT certificate programs are a great addition to Lakeland College's emergency services offerings," said Chris Senaratne, dean of the emergency training centre at Lakeland College.

"The people at Augustana have done a tremendous job with these programs and I can assure future students that we intend to meet and hopefully exceed the high standards they've set."

The new programs help Lakeland College move closer towards its goal of being a leader in all emergency services training.

"We're well known for our emergency services technology diploma program, bachelor of applied sciences: emergency services degree and a wide variety of firefighting programming. We're now looking at opportunities to provide emergency management and emergency preparedness programs," said Senaratne.

The university's online emergency medical responder (EMR) program was also transferred to Lakeland College. Lakeland already offers an EMR program onsite at its Vermilion campus and will not be offering the online version this year. 🔥

To learn more about the paramedic and EMT programs, please visit [www.lakelandcollege.ca](http://www.lakelandcollege.ca) or phone 1-800-661-6490, ext. 8527.

### Training Grant Initiative update

## Numbers tell the story

As you read this, the grants for emergency management, fire services and ground search and rescue training will have been awarded. This year, \$800,000 was available with \$150,000 earmarked for each of ground search and rescue and emergency management training and \$500,000 was allocated for fire training.

The grants are a vital resource for the three disciplines. Since 1999, 375 municipal emergency management training applications have been approved, resulting in over 13,500 emergency management staff receiving training in 486 events. The fire

services training initiative has likewise been tremendously successful, contributing \$1.5 million towards firefighter training. The 2006/2007 grants funded the attendance of approximately 2,300 firefighters from over 300 municipalities on approximately 120 courses. Up-to-date figures for the ground search and rescue grants were not available at the time of writing but they, too, are impressive.

The number of documents required for the grants was reduced this year. Eliminating information and requirements that appeared on more than one document was

completed and in some cases the process and requirements were altered in favour of easing the burden on the applicants. There may be additional amendments for the 2009/2010 grant year. A review of the timelines will be conducted, with the intent of announcing the grant availability shortly after the budget is approved. It is desirable that grant availability be known prior to the traditional summer period, with the desired end result being the announcement of the successful applicants late in the calendar year.

Good luck in your training activities as we head into the summer months!!! 🔥

# Effective promotions for greater participation in Emergency Preparedness Week

Wanting to bolster greater support for Emergency Preparedness Week 2009, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) reached out to the fire and emergency management community for help in getting the preparedness message out to Alberta communities.

“Emergency services workers were called on to bring their experience, knowledge and enthusiasm to the fore to make Emergency Preparedness Week – May 3-9, 2009 – a resounding success,” said Colin Lloyd, AEMA Executive Director of Planning and Operations. “It was a great opportunity to improve community emergency preparedness and increase awareness.”

EP Week is a national campaign that provides an opportunity to focus on individual


preparedness for emergencies and disasters. This includes increasing awareness of planning for risks, as well as being prepared to survive for the first 72 hours after an event, such as severe weather.

The 2009 campaign focused on three concrete directives of emergency planning:

- **Know the risks** – although the consequences of disasters can be similar, knowing the risks specific to your community and your region can help you better prepare. It is important to find out what the hazards are in your region.
- **Make a plan** – it is easy and essential. Every Canadian household needs an emergency plan. It will help every family member know what to do if disaster strikes. Make your own plan and print it out today.

- **Get a kit** – it doesn't take long. Find out what goes into an emergency kit, or where you can buy one. An emergency kit helps ensure every family member is ready to cope on their own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency.

Lloyd pointed out that emergency management is a shared responsibility. It involves government at all levels as well as industry and business, non-government organizations, associations, communities, first responders and, most importantly, Alberta citizens and their families.

“We encouraged all stakeholders to get involved with EP Week this year and create awareness of emergency preparedness and response capabilities in their community,” he concluded. 

## AFCA 2009 Conference

# Don't miss this year's conference

**E**XCELLENT ORGANIZATION, strong speaker line-up and a coordinated effort is sure to make the 2009 Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) conference one of their best efforts yet. Being held at the Capri Centre, Red Deer, the conference takes place May 23-27.

This year's AFCA conference organizers focused on the theme “Rewards of Partnership” for their selection of speakers, activities and location. “Red Deer is the ideal location for this year's conference,” said Brian McEvoy, AFCA President. “It emphasizes the partnership we have established with the County of Red Deer, the City of Red Deer and the surrounding industry. The location also builds on the good partnership the AFCA has established with the Capri Centre for the past 10 years. Plus, the location means that all attendees have a reasonable travel time to take part in the conference.”


The conference's keynote speaker is Bruce Kirkby, host of CBC television's *No Opportunity Wasted*. His keynote address, *Overcoming Fears of Accomplishment*, will reach out to all conference delegates. As well there are a number of top-notch speakers talking about current partnerships and the development of effective relationships. These include:

- Recruitment and Retention by Karen Lynch from Volunteers Alberta
- Offensive and Defensive Firefighting Strategies for Extinguishment by Ben Klaene, Safety and Training Chief, Cincinnati Fire Department
- Training and Training Materials by Ed Kirtley, IFSTA Curriculum and Program Coordinator with Oklahoma State University.

In addition to the diverse range of speakers provided through multiple topic streams, this year's conference also includes the very popular trade show. “This year's trade show is going to be one of our best,” added McEvoy.

“We have a wide variety of materials, equipment and organizations that will be participating.”

This year, delegates have a comprehensive array of attendance options to choose from. Beyond the regular full conference rate, fire chiefs can also buy day passes for one or more of their firefighters; delegates can choose to attend just one day or more, or attend the trade show only.

“We've tried to make this year's conference and trade show as accessible as possible,” noted McEvoy. “Knowing that the event will provide something for everyone, we want to make sure people can participate according to their schedules.” 



For more information about the conference or to register, go to [www.afca.ab.ca](http://www.afca.ab.ca)

# Focusing on the positive

BY CHAD SARTISON, President, The Fire Within

To discuss this issue's theme of mitigation, which is defined by Webster's dictionary as the action of lessening in severity or intensity, let's start with a question:

A: "is it possible to mitigate the impact the recession has on our families, our friends and our fire departments?" or

B: "is it possible to amplify the impact the recession has on our families, our friends and our fire departments?"

If you answered yes to only one of these questions, chances are you are already making it your reality. My question to you is which did you answer yes to?

In athletics, it is widely accepted that where you look your body follows. Just ask an Olympic Games diver or a PGA golfer. The same happens to be true in life - where our head goes, we go, whether we like it or not.

I certainly don't mean to marginalize the impact this recession is having on any of us. There is nothing more real than losing our jobs or half of our retirement savings, but I can say with absolute certainty that your true assets are not sitting in the bank or a stock portfolio. They are sitting across from



## the FIRE WITHIN

you at the breakfast table or behind you in your pumper. They are your family, your friends and your fellow firefighters.

As firefighters, we all know the dangers of tunnel vision or channelized attention on a fire scene. Simply put, when we become channelized our surroundings become degraded. We miss opportunities and we miss hazards. The same fire call we had the day before becomes exponentially more dangerous when we channelize our attention. Military fighter pilots call it "dying relaxed" when they fly their plane perfectly into the ground without even knowing it.

The same is true when we channelize our attention on the recession. We miss opportunities and we exponentially increase the impact the recession has on our families and our fire departments.

Chiefs and officers are expected to be leaders and now is the time to lead. Look for opportunities to positively impact your fire department and your firefighters that weren't there six months ago. Look for opportunities to connect with your community in ways that weren't possible six months ago. Look for ways to "mitigate" the impact the recession has on your fire department and your department will stride forward while others stumble back.

With industry slowing, we now have the opportunity to capture the interest of good men and women who are looking for a career change or to volunteer their time. The public we serve are still looking for support. While many organizations are retracting inward and cutting programs, they understand that we cannot. Our communities will be there for us if we ask the right questions.

As the tax base shrinks, the spotlight will be on our towns and municipalities to cut costs and cancel programs. With so many watching, what will you do?

Mitigation is essentially about strategy, and scarcity and competition drive strategy. As firefighters, we are expected and trained to quickly develop a strategy when we approach a motor vehicle collision or a working fire. We look at the desired end result and we begin to fold back a process with contingencies that will get us to our desired end result.

As we look forward toward the next five years, the same will ring true for the fire service. Opportunities abound and, when you think about it, the opportunity to distance yourself from your competitors is double when you are going forward and they are falling back. 🔥

### Did you know?

Did you know that The Fire Within was featured in the February 2009 issue of the Firefighting in Canada magazine. The cover of the magazine shows the Andrew Fire Department's calendar photo. Click on the link to check out the article and see who else appears in this issue - [www.chadsartison.ca/pdf/articles.pdf](http://www.chadsartison.ca/pdf/articles.pdf)

The Fire Within's calendar project continues to grow stronger each year. This year, the project raised over \$420,000 that stayed directly with the Alberta fire departments who raised it. And, thanks to sponsors such as EnCana, Total Fire Group and Commercial Solutions, departments also received over \$112,000 in equipment and training through participation in the calendar project.

The Fire Within is now accepting applications for the 2010 edition of the calendar!

If your department is interested in being featured in the 2010 edition of the calendar or if you would like more information on the project, call 1-866-HERO-911



# Access world newspaper database through Alberta Government Library



**D** ID YOU KNOW that you can access the “PressDisplay” database from your desktop free of charge? Simply log into [www.servicelink.gov.ab.ca/libraries/databases/pressdisplay.html](http://www.servicelink.gov.ab.ca/libraries/databases/pressdisplay.html) and start surfing.

PressDisplay is a unique database that provides access to over 800 national and international full text/full scan daily newspapers published in 76 countries in 38 languages. Newspapers are available on the web site on the day of publication (with an archive for 60 days). Articles and other key content such as advertisements, classifieds and notices are also included in the database. Also, most of these articles include a translation feature to a language of your choice.

Canadian newspapers include the Edmonton Journal, Calgary Herald, The Globe & Mail, National Post, Regina Leader-Post, Montreal Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Star, The Vancouver Sun, The Cape Breton Post and many more!

International newspapers include the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, International Herald Tribune, The Wall Street Journal, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, Le Figaro, Times of London, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allegemaine Zeitung, Asia Weekly, The Sydney Morning Herald and many more!

To select a newspaper, use the right menu Newspaper tab to select a title for viewing.

- By Country – newspapers are sorted by country of publication. Select a country name, and available titles are listed in left panes.
- By Language – newspapers are sorted by the language in which the content is written. Select a language, and available titles are listed in the left panes.

- Alphabetically – newspapers are sorted by the first letter of the publication name.
- Selecting an Issue – clicking a newspaper title from any list automatically opens the most current issue for the paper.
- Previous Issues – once a newspaper has been selected, a calendar menu with the current issue’s date appears at the top of the screen. Select the calendar menu and choose any date with black numbering. A 60 day archive is available for most titles.

Navigating pages is easy. Say you want to find articles on ‘stimulus package’ that appeared in today’s newspapers. From the PressDisplay home page, key in the words ‘stimulus package’ in the search box. You will get a listing with the name of the newspaper, page number and a blurb.

Here’s another example. You want to find references to emergency preparedness in today’s issue of the Washington Post. From the PressDisplay home page, select the Newspapers tab and sort titles by country, selecting USA. Scroll through and select Washington Post. The current issue opens automatically. Select the search tab on the right and enter the term emergency preparedness. Run the search. Pages containing the word emergency preparedness are listed below your search. Click a page to view (word matches are highlighted in red within the image).

Searches can be run across any issue, but it is not possible to search multiple issues or several different newspaper titles in a single search. In addition to article text, words may be found in advertisements, image captions, listings for stocks, TV, sports, etc. Only single keywords or short phrases are accepted.

Boolean operators, truncation, stemming or other advanced search parameters are not supported in searching.

To view pages, use numbered tabs at the page corners to turn the page forward or backward through the issue. A thumbnails tab on the right previews each page of the issue. Click any thumbnail image to jump to that page. At the bottom of the screen, you can toggle among several viewing modes: one page, two pages or all thumbnails.

To zoom, click on an image to zoom in. You can also select the magnifying glass at the bottom of the page. Additional magnification levels are also available here. Click and drag to move the zoomed area. You can also click and drag the orange box on the thumbnail to the right. To turn off zoom mode, click the magnifying glass at the bottom of the screen or the ‘x’ at the top corner of the enlarged image.

For article delivery, an email option is available at the bottom of each newspaper image view. Fill out the form entirely. A durable link to the page is delivered. Printing of images is not supported in the PressDisplay. For Smart navigation papers, a print option is available within the article ‘Text view’.

Important note: Only eight concurrent (simultaneous) users are allowed. When finished, please be sure to “sign out” in the upper right corner. 🔥

For more information about this or other services available through the Alberta Government Library, contact Mica Wickramasekara, Acting Head Librarian, Alberta Government Library, Commerce Place Site at [Mica.wickramasekara@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Mica.wickramasekara@gov.ab.ca) or by phone at 780-427-0389.

# Emergency Management Director for Wood Buffalo



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo recently appointed Rene Wells to the position of Director of Emergency Management. In this position, Wells is responsible for coordinating the response to emergencies within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Working with other agencies, Wells will take the lead in the event that the Emergency Operation

Centre (EOC) is activated in order to manage an emergency or disaster response. One of his first priorities will be to engage stakeholders in developing and implementing a river breakup plan in advance of this annual event along the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers.

Wells has been in Fort McMurray for two years and comes to the Municipality directly from the RCMP. He served with the RCMP in a variety of duties for over 29 years, most recently as Inspector in charge of Operations Support at Wood Buffalo Detachment. He has also been with the RCMP in many locations across Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

## Alberta Building Code and Alberta Fire Code updates

# Important changes announced

**J**UST IN CASE YOU MISSED IT, changes have been made to the Alberta Building Code and the Alberta Fire Code that will help ensure that new homes are built in a way that will prevent or slow down the spread of fire and prevent fires from starting on construction sites.

The building code changes include adding new fire resistance requirements for homes built close together, improving sprinkler or exterior siding requirements for walk-up apartment buildings and

adding new fire resistance requirements for the interior of attached garages.

Fire code changes include: requirements that buildings adjacent to construction sites be protected from potential fires; enhanced fire safety plans on construction sites to help control fire hazards in and around buildings; clarifying where fire extinguishers should be located on construction sites; improving safety measures for construction processes involving heat sources, such as roofing equipment, in order to prevent these

activities from starting fires; improving access to construction sites for fire departments by ensuring fire trucks have adequate access to the site to be effective; firefighters having access to all parts of a building under construction; and that appropriate water supply systems are in place to accommodate firefighting.

The fire codes were effective immediately (March 12, 2009) and the new building codes come into effect May 3, 2009. 🔥

More information is available at [www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca)

## Strathcona Fallen Fire Fighters

# Plan to attend

The Strathcona Fallen Fire Fighters' Memorial Training Symposium 2009 takes place October 1-4, 2009 at Festival Place in Sherwood Park, Alberta. This year's event includes four days of realistic scenario and interactive-based training for all ranks, provided by the NGLB Training Group. Sessions include:

- Building Construction for Today's Fire Service (didactic)
- Reading Smoke for Fireground Success (didactic)
- Fireground Air Management (didactic)
- Hoseline Operations for Today's

Fireground (didactic)

- Large Area (Big Box) Search & 65 mm (2 1/2")
- Hands-on-Training (H.O.T.)

Other activities combined with the symposium are the Strathcona Fallen Fire Fighters' Memorial March on the morning of Saturday October 3. As well, a night of comedy has been scheduled for the Saturday evening.

Symposium registration is limited to the first 200 applications received. While there are three attendance options,

full seminar attendance includes a complimentary ticket to the Saturday evening of comedy and camaraderie. All proceeds support the Strathcona Fallen Fire Fighters' Memorial Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of children of fire, police and emergency medical personnel who perish as a result of their emergency response activities. 🔥

For advanced registration information, please email [strathconaguard@shaw.ca](mailto:strathconaguard@shaw.ca).



## Institute progress continues

In the February issue of *Alberta On Scene*, Dr. Lorne Taylor and Val Mellesmoen of Taylor Consulting were introduced as consultants retained by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency to develop recommendations for the advancement of the Safety, Security and Environment Institute. The work was to be done in four phases: scoping and discovery; consultation; initial recommendations and review; and implementation.

The first two phases were completed. Taylor Consulting spoke with academics, industrial representatives, deputy ministers,

other senior government officials and ministers, similar research organizations and institutes and some area experts and researchers. Their discussions were extremely fruitful and resulted in the retention of Rob Seidel, Q.C., a legal advisor from the firm Davis LLP. Rob's task was to develop structure and governance options based on Taylor Consulting's meetings and to present those options to the advisory committee on February 12, 2009.

Rob suggested two options. A statutory corporation, which is established by a legislative act or regulation, or a self-created

corporation created under the authority of existing statutes such as the *Societies Act*. Both are governed by a board of directors and each has its own merits and limitations.

The dialogue during the February 12 meeting, combined with the previous consultations, gave Taylor Consulting all the information they needed to prepare a final report and recommendations. The draft of that report was provided in March, with a final report, ready for the Minister's consideration, to be prepared shortly after that. 🔥

### *The Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program*

## Possible floods, severe storms and wildfires

**I**T IS MAY AND THE DISASTER RECOVERY TEAM is preparing for another year of possible floods, severe storms and wildfires. In 2008, the province experienced six severe weather events that resulted in disaster recovery programs totally over \$18.0 million in assistance and six wildfires outside of the Forest Protection Area that resulted in Municipal Wildfire Assistance Programs totalling over \$2.2 million in assistance. Since 1990, the province has committed almost \$600 million to disaster recovery programs, including \$238 million since 2005.

The provincial Disaster Recovery Regulation requires that three requirements be met for approval of a Disaster Recovery Program:

- 1) There must be widespread damage;
- 2) The cause of the event must be considered extraordinary; and
- 3) Insurance against the loss must not be reasonably and readily available.

Flooding as the result of an extraordinary weather event is covered in the Disaster Assistance Guidelines that govern the establishment of a program and assistance for damages applied for under a program. The guidelines set the

benchmarks for approving programs that are applied for as a result of weather-related events. In order for a program to qualify for overland flooding, the rainfall must have been at least a one in 25 year level in urban areas or a one in 50 year level in rural areas. If the flooding is caused by a waterway, the stream flow must exceed a 1 in 100 year level to be considered extraordinary. These amounts must be verified by water collection data provided by Alberta Environment and storm data provided by Environment Canada. Once a municipality has requested disaster recovery program assistance, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency works with the municipality, Alberta Environment and potentially Environment Canada in gathering the necessary information.

To be eligible for assistance, the damage must be from an event that is uninsurable including overland flooding and



groundwater seepage. Insurable damage includes sewer or sump pit back-up, water entry from above ground including roofs, windows or other areas of the building that are not at ground level. Wind, hail and fire damage are also insurable and not eligible for DRP assistance.

The Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program is a province-wide program developed by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. The

*Continued on next page. ►►*



program was implemented in April 2003 and is intended to help reduce both the risk and losses associated with wildfires and designed to assist municipalities with extraordinary costs for the suppression of wildfires when they occur. It is also intended to improve wildfire prevention and suppression effectiveness in Alberta.

For approval of a Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program, the following requirements must be met:

- A municipality must contact Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) as early as practicable and use SRD resources, if deemed appropriate.
- A municipality must provide an investigation report on the fire.
- Have total costs for fighting the fire that exceed the \$25 per capita threshold based on the latest Municipal Affairs population statistics for the municipality.

If a Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program is approved for a municipality, they can be reimbursed for 75 per cent of their costs specific to the fire, above the \$25 per capita threshold.

Homeowners can prevent or mitigate some of the damages from overland flooding and groundwater seepage by following some simple steps. Properly preparing the home won't completely guarantee that flood damage will not happen, but it does reduce the risk.

Some of the measures cost very little and help reduce vulnerability to flooding; others require planning and structural alterations to the home.



## Site Preparation

- **Landscaping:** Landscape a slope away from the house at least as far away as four feet from the foundation to ensure that water leaking from eavestroughs is carried away from the house. The Alberta New Home Warranty Program provides some information on surface water management, visit: [www.anhwp.com/pdfs/surfacewaterbrochure.pdf](http://www.anhwp.com/pdfs/surfacewaterbrochure.pdf)
- **Downspouts:** Downspouts should extend to the end of the slope of the landscaping to prevent pooling against the house.
- **Rain barrels:** Rain barrels should be placed at the top of the slope away from the house to ensure overflowing rain barrels drain away from the house.

*“Some homeowners may experience difficulty with their floor drains discharging, due to root buildup in the pipes. Mature neighborhoods are susceptible to this type of concern due to the number of large trees with heavy root systems.”*

## Building construction

- **Sump pumps:** Sump pumps should be installed and should drain at least as far away as four feet from the foundation to ensure that water is carried away from the house. Ideally, a hose should be run to the street to allow the water to drain into the storm sewer system. Some devices may require a plumbing permit, so check with the municipal office or a qualified plumber before carrying out any installation. If the home already has a sump pump, test it to ensure that everything is working properly. Remove the cover, pour a pail of water into the sump and lift the float to engage the pump. If the pump does not expel the water, you may need to replace it or have it checked by a qualified plumber.
- **Weeping tile:** Weeping tile should be inspected to ensure it is functioning properly. If there is no weeping tile around the foundation of the home,


the homeowner may wish to consider having this installed and draining into a sump pump to remove water from the foundation.

- **Insulation:** The homeowner may wish to consider replacing the lowest four feet of insulation in the home below grade with sheets of polystyrene. Polystyrene insulation does not get moldy during floods, can be cleaned and does not store water.
- **Drywall:** The lowest three to four inches of drywall could be removed, and the gap covered with a wide baseboard that is screwed in place, not glued. This will reduce the chance of drywall 'wicking' moisture up into the walls and to allow ready access in order to allow the stud cavities to be ventilated and dried.
- **Floor drains:** The main household sewer line should have a sewer backup preventer installed to protect the house from a backup of the municipal sewer system. The valves should be inspected and maintained to ensure they are operating properly. Some devices may require a plumbing permit, so check with the municipal office or a qualified plumber before carrying out any installation. Some homeowners may experience difficulty with their floor drains discharging, due to root buildup in the pipes. Mature neighbourhoods are susceptible to this type of concern due to the number of large trees with heavy root systems. Since a homeowner's floor drain is rarely used, it is not usually put to the test very often. Pouring water down the floor drain to see how well it is working may identify if the line is partially or fully blocked. Blocked floor drains should be addressed to ensure that any water entering the basement is able to exit through the floor drain.
- **Doors and windows:** Door and window wells below grade should drain into the weeping tile. Window wells should be six inches deeper than the bottom of the window.
- **Furnace and hot water tank:** The furnace and hot water tank should be raised an additional six inches above the floor. Ensure that the pedestal is made of fireproof material and meets all building and safety code requirements.

## Lifestyle choices

- **Carpet:** No basement should contain nailed down or glued down carpet. All below-grade carpets should be easy to roll and lift, so that wet carpet can be discarded for health reasons after flooding. Carpet underlay is extremely difficult to dry and usually needs to be replaced after flooding.

- **Power bars and extension cords:** All power bars and extension cords should be run six inches above the basement floor to prevent electrical damage.
- **Appliances:** Appliances in the basement should be raised a minimum of six inches off the floor to prevent avoidable replacement or costly repairs.

- **Storage:** All items stored in a basement should be off the floor in water-tight containers. 

Following some of these simple suggestions may limit potential flooding and/or prevent extensive damages to the basement if flooding or groundwater seepage occurs. An excellent guide to flood prevention is available from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation at [www.cmhc.ca/en/corp/nero/retousar/2009/2009-01-30.cfm](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/corp/nero/retousar/2009/2009-01-30.cfm).

# Digest

## In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of the following Alberta fire personnel:

\* \* \* \* \*

**Larry Battenfelder**, a firefighter with the Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service, passed away December 28, 2008.

\* \* \* \* \*

**John Jusypink**, Fire Chief for the Smoky Lake County Fire Department, died on December 31, 2008.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Shaun Granton**, firefighter with the Vermilion Fire Department, died on January 3, 2009.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2009 Annual Hose Coupling Competition

The ideal location for the 2009 Annual Hose Coupling Competition is Vegreville, Alberta as they celebrate their 100 year anniversary as a fire department. The event takes place on Saturday August 15, 2009.

## Staff updates

- If you think you're hearing a familiar voice when you call the AEMA's main phone number, you are correct. **Nadine Elcock** is back from maternity leave.

- **Michelle Dyck** joined the agency on March 2, 2009 as the new Senior Policy Analyst/Writer, replacing Lisa Sherman who is on secondment at the Regulatory Review Secretariat. Formerly a policy analyst with the Climate Change, Air Land and Policy Branch of Alberta Environment, Michelle has many years of valuable experience in policy and legislation development.

- **Amanda Mycko** has also joined the agency full time as the new Manager of Finance, Administration and Policy, effective March 23, 2009. Previously, she was with the Public Safety Division (PSD) of Municipal Affairs, most recently as the Coordinator of Finance and Administration. When the agency was formed in 2007, Amanda continued to provide financial support. Her knowledge in finance and administration and the day-to-day operations of the agency will be very beneficial.

- **Kevan Jess** accepted Chief Fire Administrator position in the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs, effective January 28, 2009. He will be working directly at a technical level with the Alberta Fire Code and its users to make it accessible, better understood and a more-effectively used document.

- **Fred Tyrrell** will be completing his 15-month secondment at the end of May is returning to his previous government department that he came from. The agency thanks Fred for all his hard work.

- **Dwight Osbaldeston** accepted a two-year term as Senior Advisor to the Executive Leadership Team. Since March 2008, Dwight has been working on a number of major projects and providing advice and leadership to the AEMA. He will continue to report directly to the Managing Director; his responsibilities will include designing and/or implementing complex projects/programs (e.g. quality management framework for the agency, executive liaison with industry) and working with emergency system partners to craft measurable performance management objectives and tracking systems for the overall performance of the emergency management system in line with applicable standards to ensure that the agency sustains

its strategic focus on meeting client and partner needs. He has 37 years of experience in fire – rescue, emergency medical services and emergency management including fire chief, manager of emergency services and Assistant Director of Emergency Preparedness for Strathcona County prior to his retirement in 2008. Dwight has also responded to four international catastrophic level disasters and gained experience in evacuation, emergency shelter management, damage assessment, family services, and financial assistance. He also has extensive experience in strategic planning and corporate performance.

## Good news indeed!

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and the Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association are pleased to announce that a one million dollar training grant has been instituted for online education for 2009. Medteq Solutions has agreed to be the delivery partners for this training grant. Grant applications are available as of May 1, 2009, which is expected to benefit more than 3000 Canadian volunteer and combination fire departments. For more information visit [www.afca.ab.ca](http://www.afca.ab.ca)





# AEMA awards winning newspapers

**T**HE ALBERTA WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS ASSOCIATION (AWNA) fire prevention week involvement wrapped up with the presentation of awards at their annual conference, which was held on January 31, 2009. As mentioned in the February issue of *Alberta On Scene*, winners and two honourable



Isabell Redding, Drumheller Times, with Dave Hodgins and Trent West



Heather Pickett, Lacombe Globe with Dave Hodgins and Trent West of the AEMA



The Lloydminster Meredian Booster's Heidi Lindskog accepts her framed certificate from Dave Hodgins and Trent West.

mentions were announced in three categories - Under 2,500 - Macleod Gazette; 2,501-5,000 - Lacombe Globe; 5,001 and over - Drumheller Valley Times. As indicated in the photos below, Alberta Emergency Management Agency Managing Director David Hodgins and Alberta Fire Commissioner Trent West were on hand to present the awards. 🔥

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