

Alberta On Scene



FOR PARTNERS IN FIRE AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

VOLUME 31 | #03

AUGUST 2010

A picture's worth 1,000 words

Minister Goudreau receives hands-on firefighter training

WHEN ALBERTA MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS Minister Hector Goudreau and his Executive Assistant, Wendy Rodgers paid a visit to Strathcona County Emergency Services in Sherwood Park, Alberta they also got a chance to get up close and personal with firefighter equipment.

“The Minister took the time to talk with our front-line staff and chief officers about challenges we face...”



Left to right: Minister Hector Goudreau, Platoon Chief Dan Tymko, Fire Chief Darrell Reid, Minister's Executive Assistant Wendy Rodgers and Lieutenant Neil Woods.

“It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to discuss issues confronting the fire service and emergency management in Alberta with Minister Goudreau,” said

Strathcona County Emergency Services Chief Darrell Reid. “The Minister took the time to talk with our front-line staff and chief officers about challenges we face

This is the 7th issue of *Alberta On Scene*.
Let us know what you think, write to:
aema@gov.ab.ca

Continued on last page ►►

Government of Alberta ■

Contents

Alberta Fire Chiefs Association update..... 4

3minutedrill campaign update.....5

Training opportunity summary6

Emergency Preparedness Week update.....7

Emergency preparedness update..... 8

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development update 9

Municipal Emergency Management Program (MEMP) update.....10

Recalling Big Valley Jamboree's major weather event..... 11

2010 NFPA Conference and Expo12

Frequently asked WCB questions..... 13

AFRRCS update13

Search and Rescue update14

Alberta Building Code amendments16

AEMA staff helping out18

Provincial Certification Examinations – Approval of curriculum..... 19

Disaster Social Services..... 20

2010 FPW sneak preview.....21

The Fire Within update..... 22

Digest.....19

On Scene Editorial Board

- Lyle Birnie
Fire Chief (retired),
Westlock Fire Department
- Bob Gates
Fire Chief, Town of Beaumont
- Trent West
Alberta Fire Commissioner and
Executive Director of Administration,
Finance and Training
- Spence Sample
Director, Special Projects and
Deputy Fire Commissioner
- Colin Lloyd
Executive Director, Planning
and Operations
- Mahendra Wijayasinghe
Manager, Research & Analysis
- Tim Chander
Public Affairs Officer
- Rosemary Austen
Public Affairs Officer
- Jayne Jeneroux
Managing Editor/Writer

SEE BACK COVER FOR CONTACT INFORMATION.

ISSN 0848-6794

Getting the word out: information leads to awareness

AS THE TITLE SUGGESTS, getting the word out provides a real opportunity to enhance awareness among senior officials related to major emergencies happening in and around our province. This includes awareness about the various responding agencies, the number, type and severity of events as well as the resources required to respond to and protect life, property, the environment and the economy.

“The Agency has a legislated mandate and responsibility within the government of Alberta and beyond...”

Why is it important for senior decision-makers to have awareness and be informed about emergencies in a timely way? The answer to this question is somewhat self-explanatory in that these individuals are responsible to make decisions. The more they know about the business and challenges of fire services, search and rescue and emergency management, the better prepared they are to make informed decisions that will allow for effective and efficient public safety services. To create informed decisions, policy and decision-makers need a high-level of awareness and understanding associated with the business of public safety generally and its critical needs. Sharing information in a timely manner does not translate into more lights and sirens being immediately available to respond to and mitigate an emergency event. What sharing does create is many more champions within the greater system with an advanced understanding and therefore a willingness



Dave Hodgins

to take the lead toward developing and implementing solutions, which includes ensuring legislation, policies and programs are in place to provide the right resources to the right place at the right time.

The phrase, “You only need to know things on a need to know basis,” was aptly illustrated in a notable episode of the TV comedy *Yes, Prime Minister*, as indicated below.

Bernard Woolley: But, you only need to know things on a need-to-know basis.

*Sir Humphrey Appleby: I need to know *everything.* How else can I judge whether or not I need to know it?*

Bernard Woolley: So that means you need to know things even when you don't need to know them. You need to know them not because you need to know them but because you need to know whether or not you need to know. If you don't need to know, you still need to know so that you know that there is no need to know.

Sir Humphrey Appleby: Yes!

Bernard Woolley: Good. That's very clear.

“The need to know” agency reports

A situation report is distributed via email by the Agency’s Response Readiness Centre (ARRC) daily at 7:00 a.m. to approximately 900 individuals. The purpose of this report is to share information about major emergency events that have occurred in Alberta, across Canada and internationally in the past 24 hours. To receive the agency’s situation report please send a request including your name and email address to: Kelly Bokovay at Kelly.bokovay@gov.ab.ca.

The agency also routinely shares event alerts (“something has just happened and here’s a heads-up”) and more detailed emergency incident reports with senior officials, MLAs, MPs, including provincial and federal ministers, and others. Recipients truly appreciate receiving information that is provided on a timely basis, as illustrated by the following messages provided by Government of Alberta ministers:

- **October 2008 wildfires:** *Thank you very, very much for this info-update. I appreciate it greatly and should there be a need feel free to call me on my private cell, which I have on during major events. Thanks again!*
- **April 2009 wildfires:** *Thank you very much for your very quick and effective actions that undoubtedly helped stave off a potentially disastrous situation. I did get your advisories right at the time you sent them and I alerted local First Nation chiefs as to what was going on (since two of them were in a meeting*

with me at that exact time) and to our action-plan-of-help, etc., courtesy of your email. I really appreciated you having informed us and just wanted to formally acknowledge same. It put us ahead of the curve, and for that we were all grateful – especially the chiefs. Thanks again!

- **November 2009 H1N1 support:** *I very much like the updates on the services being provided and clinic wait times. Thank you.*
- **January 2010 Haiti support:** *Looks like relief and relocation efforts are coming together as efficiently as possible. Thank you again.*
- **February 2010 Haiti support:** *I have greatly appreciated your updates. This past week I was in Washington and had the privilege of meeting the man providing support to President Obama for the Haiti mission. Daniel works in the White House and spoke of their learning from Katrina.*
- **April 2010 severe storms Calgary and area:** *Thanks again for the information and for keeping us posted.*

- **May 2010 wildfires:** *Sounds very intimidating, but at least somewhat hopeful to be brought under control.*
- **May 2010 fire in senior’s complex:** *Sounds like everything is being handled well! Thanks for the information.*

The agency has a legislated mandate and responsibility within the Government of Alberta and beyond to our stakeholders to coordinate, cooperate, collaborate and communicate. The daily situation reports, the emergency event alerts and incident reports have been very well received and this is a real example of what we mean when we say that we take our responsibilities very seriously, especially our responsibility to communicate, communicate and communicate and then communicate some more. 🔥

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

2007 Alberta Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report

Latest Alberta Fire Statistics report now available

Ever wonder what happens to the fire incident reports that you or your department provide to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency? They get compiled and carefully analyzed into the latest annual statistics report.

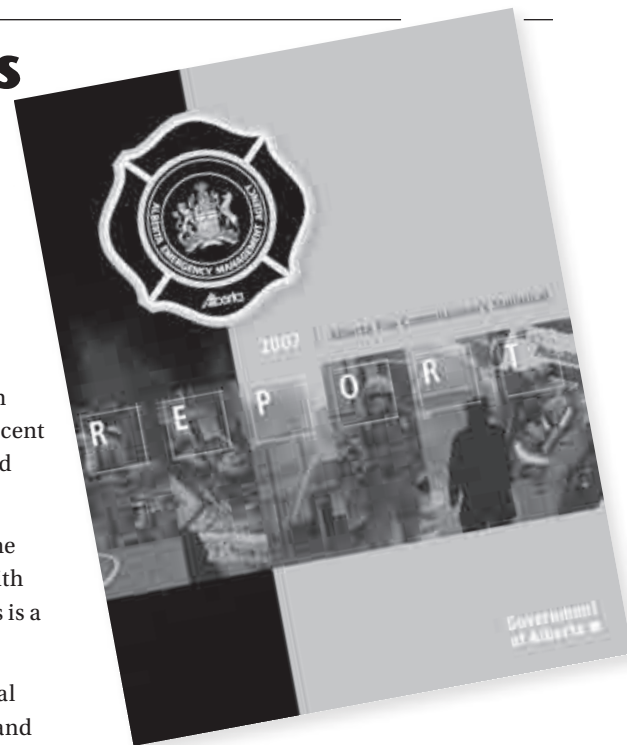
The most recent report (2007) indicates that 5,296 fires in Alberta were reported to the Fire Commissioner at the agency for the year 2007. These fires resulted in 23 deaths, 212 injuries and \$327 million in direct property losses. On average, during the 10-year period 1998 to 2007, there were 1.1 fire deaths per 100,000 population in Alberta. Most fire deaths and injuries happened in places where Albertans feel the safest – their homes. Although only 33 per cent of all fires occurred in homes, 74 per cent of all fire deaths, 57 per cent of all fire injuries and 48 per cent of all property losses from fires

occurred in this property class. Home fire safety continues to be a priority for the agency and the fire and emergency services in Alberta.

Arson or set fires ranked number one in the list of Acts and Omissions at 27 per cent of all fires. These fires need broad-based reduction strategies.

In addition, seniors continue to have the highest risk for fire death in Alberta, with their numbers growing every year. This is a statistic that deserves close attention.

The 2007 Fire Commissioner’s Statistical Report, containing data tables, charts and texts, is enhanced by digital images of fire incidents from the year in review, provided by the Alberta fire service. The report was distributed in early July.



The Fire Commissioner encourages both the fire service and the insurance industry to practice accurate and timely fire reporting so fire loss stats can be compiled. 🔥

Record attendance and interesting sessions make for a great conference

BY BILL PURDY, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Executive Director



THE 63rd ANNUAL Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) conference was held at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton June 20 - 23, 2010. Attendance was the highest in the history of the association, with over 200 full time delegates plus 200 day passes for the various events. The trade show booths were sold out (100) and there were approximately 30 outside booths.

The new Lieutenant Governor of Alberta was the keynote speaker for the opening ceremonies. The Honourable Don Ethell was made an honorary AFCA patron and was presented with the customary white chief's helmet by President Brian Cornforth.

The first order of business for the business session was election of the 2010 - 2011 AFCA president. City of Lethbridge Fire Chief Brian Cornforth was elected by acclamation.

The guest speaker for the Tuesday breakfast was Jim Garland, EMS Dispatch Director, Alberta Health Services. Many fire chiefs and municipal administrators have questioned Alberta Health taking over dispatch services from the municipalities. Mr. Garland attempted to explain why it was necessary. The Board of AFCA will continue to work with Alberta Health and Wellness on this matter.

There were also a number of very interesting sessions for delegates, including:

- **Kevan Jess**, Fire Chief Administrator, Safety Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs, presented the history of the fire code, nationally and provincially. He advised that as the codes are being amended to reflect the economy in Alberta, now is the time to provide comments and suggestions on changes to both the national and provincial codes. Jess

also explained the process for submitting changes, including the format to use and to whom any changes should be submitted.

- Battalion Chief **Forest Reeder** of Training and Safety for the Pleasantview District of southwestern United States provided a presentation entitled "The Training Challenges: what needs to be in our training program".
- Western Canada Spill Services (WCSS) Operational Manager **Mike Locke** presented information on services available from WCSS. His topic was "Cooperative involvement in the cleanup of major oil spills in western Canada". His presentation included how WCSS integrates with government, industry as well as the public and how their resources can be used to better prepare for and manage events.
- Volunteer Alberta Executive Director **Karen Lynch** reviewed the recent report on retention and recruitment. Volunteer Alberta completed an environmental scan in November 2009; the strategy and working tools kit was completed May 15, 2010. The report has a number of recommendations and the working committee will continue to refine the tools to fit what may be required in various departments.
- **Denis Cunningham**, Dean of Lakeland College's Emergency Training Centre, and Chris Senaratne, Manager of Accreditation and Certification with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, presented an agency pilot study about using different curricular and options for using approved textbooks to challenge the provincial written and practical examinations.
- **Patricia Poulton** provided an overview of TransCanada and its emergency system, which provided delegates with firsthand knowledge of TransCanada response plans.

The new AFCA Board for 2010 - 2011 is:

President – Brian Cornforth, Fire Chief, Lethbridge

First Vice President – Al Schram, Fire Chief, Edson

Second Vice President – Peter Krich, Fire Chief, Camrose

Secretary-Treasurer – Dan Lemieux, Fire Chief, Grande Prairie

Region One Director – Dan Lemieux, Fire Chief, Grande Prairie

Region Two Director – Bill Graham, Barrhead

Region Three Director – John Helton, Fire Chief, Lamont

Region Four Director – Dave Zayonce, Fire Chief, Beaver County

Region Five Director – Lorne Thompson, Fire Chief, Olds

Region Six Director – Graham Clark, Fire Chief, High River

Region Seven Director – Greg Erickson, Fire Chief, Cardston

Director at Large – Greg Van Tighem, Fire Chief, Jasper

Director at Large – Cory Chegwyn, Fire Chief, Yellowhead County

Director at Large – Randy Siemens, Emergency Services Coordinator, Lamont County

Trade Director – Jeff Bauman (re-appointed by trade members)


- A session by **Katie Witt** on dealing with difficult people entertained delegates and at the same time provided members with skills on how to deal with difficult people.

Alberta Fire Commissioner and AEMA Executive Director of Administration, Finance and Training Trent West and AEMA Executive Director, Planning and Operations Colin Lloyd were the keynote speakers for the Tuesday June 22, 2010 luncheon. They updated delegates on AEMA fire activities.

ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric sponsored the Wednesday June 23 breakfast. Keith Carter, Vice President for Parkland Division, brought greetings. He also introduced Mark Lucas and Brad Scheidman, who spoke on electrical safety and gas safety for first responders. Mark is the deputy chief of the Vegreville Fire Department and Brad is a member of the Stony Plain Fire Department.

ATCO also sponsored the breakfast keynote speaker, Lisa Olsen, lawyer with the City of Calgary. Lisa was the lead lawyer for the Calgary Fire Department when it was sued after a major fire in 2002.

A special thanks goes out to AFCA conference sponsors the Alberta Emergency Agency, Cenovus Energy, Co-operatives, ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric, Alberta Credit Union Central, General Dynamics, GE Canada, TransCanada, Lakeland College, FDM Software, Motorola and System One.

At the conference, delegates approved five of six resolutions. The resolutions are available at www.afca.ab.ca. 

3minutedrill campaign update

Agency campaign continues to win awards

Last issue we mentioned that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency was honoured with five Advertising Club of Edmonton awards, including best advertising campaign of the year (2009).

As an update to that article, the *3minutedrill* campaign has continued to impress numerous organizations, resulting in several more recognitions and awards, including:

- St. John Ambulance 2010 Chair of the Board of Directors Award for Excellence in Work or Research in Health and Safety. This award is given to organizations that make outstanding contributions to their communities.

- an Honourable Mention from the Television Bureau of Canada 2009 Retail Commercial Award for Best Public Service Announcement.
- a Rosie for Best TV Commercial from the 2010 Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association awards.
- featured in Marketing Magazine, Canada's premier marketing resource.
- featured in various worldwide blogs for intriguing and interesting advertising including the very popular Ads of the World.
- a finalist at the Alberta Film and Television Awards for Best Commercial.

Examples of positive feedback from Alberta's fire and emergency services industries include:

I would like to add the voice of the Grande Prairie Fire Service to those who are congratulating the AEMA for the 3minutedrill program. While there is a good amount of public education programming aimed at children, we find that there are limited resources aimed at adults. Not only does the 3minutedrill address that lack, but it does it in a hard-hitting and emotional way.

— Rick Adair, Chief Fire Prevention Officer, Grande Prairie Fire Department



The 3minutedrill campaign is a fine example of a strategy which has considered research evidence, practitioner experience and local Alberta context to develop a program to raise awareness of fire safety complacency among Albertans. The message was clear and was disseminated widely through provincial and local avenues ensuring good coverage and repetition. These are key elements to begin the long process of achieving behaviour change.

— Ms. Kathy L. Belton, Associate Director, Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research 



Jessica Spratt, Public Affairs Officer with Alberta Municipal Affairs, and Dave Hodgins, Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency accepting the St. John Ambulance award.

Parkland County hosts innovative leadership course for fire services

LOOKING FOR NEW IDEAS on attraction, retention, marketing and leadership, Parkland County Fire Services took advantage of a unique opportunity to host a leadership workshop entitled *Beyond Hoses and Helmets - Strategy and Tactics of Leading a Volunteer or Combination Fire/Rescue Organization*. Designed for new and existing fire officers, the two-day course was held in Stony Plain, Alberta on May 29 and 30, 2010. It was an interactive, educational experience that included firefighters from around the province.

"I learned about this workshop about a year and a half ago and thought it was something that we needed to bring to Alberta," said Parkland County Fire Chief Jim Phelan.

"We had about 65 participants, with 20 from our local departments. The whole dynamic of the course was conducive to group sharing. Within the first hour of the course, everyone was actively participating. I have no doubt that everyone walked away armed with great information that they can use immediately."



Getting the workshop underway.

The training course was designed by practicing chief officers and offered through Pierce Fire Apparatus and the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and presented by Chief Greg. L. Render and Chief John M. Buckman.

"To have people of this calibre come out and speak to us and share their knowledge and experience was an exceptional opportunity," said Phelan. "This was the first time the course was held in Alberta and I am working to bring it back in late 2011 or early 2012."

Course topics included methods of marketing to obtain maximum results in recruiting, recognition and funding, volunteer recruiting and retention, as well as leadership skills and techniques.

This course has been presented in over 85 locations across the United States and Canada and is considered a must for all emergency service personnel dealing with the dynamic operation of a volunteer or combination fire department. 🔥



Some of the many workshop participants.

Provincial kick-offs celebrate Emergency Preparedness Week 2010

Emergency Preparedness Week (EP) is an annual campaign that encourages Albertans to be prepared in the event of an emergency or disaster. All provinces and territories participate in EP Week, as do police officers, firefighters, paramedics,

emergency management officers, industry and non-governmental organizations.

On May 3, EP Week was kicked off provincially during joint events between the Government of Alberta and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Manmeet Bhullar,

Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, participated in the Calgary event, while Dr. Raj Sherman, MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark, participated in the Edmonton launch.

During the week, Alberta Emergency Management Agency staff and field officers participated and supported a number of EP Week events across the province.

There are three simple steps that will better prepare Albertans:

- know the risks in your community or region,
- make a plan that will help you and your family know what to do and
- get an emergency kit.

The goal is that every citizen will be able to cope on their own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency. 🔥



One of AEMA's emergency vehicles at EP Week kick off.



Manmeet Bhullar kicks off EP Week in Calgary.



Manmeet Bhullar and Calgary dignitaries showcase EP Week materials.



Ed Haines, AEMA Field Officer at the Edmonton launch of EP Week.

Just when you thought your emergency preparedness kit was complete ...

By Kylie-Jane Degeling, Training Officer, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

What is the most important item to have in an emergency preparedness kit?

This question was posed to children in Grades 1, 3, 4 and 5 at Edmonton's Rio Terrace Elementary School during the 2010 Emergency Preparedness Week. The children welcomed two Alberta Emergency Management Agency staff to their school for special presentations about emergency preparedness and what students can do to help their families develop a 72-hour kit. The answers from the tiny tikes to questions about what belongs in each kit were certainly creative.

A Grade 1 girl offered up "stilts" as an item of great importance to include. When asked why, she responded matter-of-factly, "In case there's a flood!" The other Grade 1 children somberly nodded their heads in agreement. Of course you need stilts for floods, otherwise you'll get wet.

As the session with the Grade 1 class continued, the children demonstrated their abilities to think "outside the box" with numerous suggestions that few in the emergency management field had likely considered. One child recommended a good set of rags so that you could tie them together and escape down the side of the house. An innovative child suggested heat lamps to use for growing vegetables in the basement in case they were stuck down there for months. Another child fretted about what would happen if his electric toothbrush couldn't charge, and was reassured by a classmate who owned the battery-operated variety. Upon discovering the crank-operated flashlight and radio in the agency emergency display kit, the child inquired if there were also a crank-operated toothbrush?

The creativity and originality displayed by these youngsters is likely of little surprise to firefighters who are used to working with



AEMA Training Officer Kylie Degeling with daughter Jezzy and her friend Sammy at the agency's EP Week display at Hawrelak Park for "Get Ready in the Park."



Sammy and Jezzy show off EP Week t-shirts and educational material.

children during school tours of the fire station. One firefighter recounted a story about a group of children in Cold Lake who were learning about fire safety. His question, "What would you do if your clothes were on fire?" was met with an alarmed, "I wouldn't put them on." This answer, again, led to grave agreement among those in the class, who no doubt thought it was a silly question to ask in the first place. I mean - who would put their clothes on if they were on fire?

While some of the answers to emergency preparedness questions would be considered hilarious by many adults, the seriousness of emergency preparedness week was not lost on the children. As each session was run to demonstrate putting together 72-hour kits, discuss evacuation routes and the importance of knowing who to contact, the children demonstrated a genuine passion for learning. With each grade, the hands of the children seemed


to be permanently stretched up into the air with the desperate need to answer questions and share their own emergency anecdotes. Each anecdote was a reminder to the children that emergencies can happen anywhere, anytime and to anyone.

The Grade 4 and Grade 5 students were the groups most able to determine useful items for an emergency kit, and demonstrated some excellent insight into the subject of emergency preparedness. Some of the children were so enthusiastic about the subject that they wanted to stay behind to discuss it further while the rest of the school escaped outside for recess.

By the end of the day, the children from each grade made a promise to discuss emergency preparedness with their families that evening, and to check that they had evacuation routes, contact details and 72-hour kits. Armed with a 72-hour preparedness book and an emergency contact sheet to stick onto the fridge, the children were ready to spread the word at home. Further, many promised to come out to the Edmonton Emergency Preparedness Week "Get Ready in the Park" celebration and learn more with their families. True

to their word – countless children showed up and insisted that their parents look at the agency's kit on display and discuss emergency preparedness with the emergency management staff on location.

In the true nature of preparedness, the agency is already looking ahead to decide what needs to be purchased for next year's Emergency Preparedness Week presentations and displays.

One problem though ... anyone know where can we find a good pair of stilts to include in our kit? 

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development update

New wildfire management strategy benefits Albertans and the natural environment

Recognizing the importance of fire to the natural landscape, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is piloting a new wildfire management strategy that will allow specific wildfires located in remote areas to burn naturally when possible. Although the new strategy will only be applied to less than two per cent of all wildfires detected in the province, fire managers will have more latitude when fighting wildfires so they can keep Alberta's forested communities safe while allowing fires to restore healthy natural forest ecosystems.

While the new strategy represents a slight shift in Alberta's wildfire suppression operations, the initial response to wildfires remains the same. Within the Forest Protection Area, fire crews will continue to aggressively attack all new wildfires to try and contain them by the next morning. However, if a wildfire cannot be brought under control, a wildfire analysis and strategy is required to document how the fire should be managed.

"This new strategy allows us to take a step back and really look at different options to manage each fire on an individual

basis," said John Brewer, Director, Wildfire Operations, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. "We choose the best way to manage each fire that will benefit Albertans and the natural landscape as well."


Wildfires help renew the forest ecosystem and encourage new growth. As a natural part of every forest ecosystem, wildfire helps to control the spread of forest pests (like mountain pine beetle) and reduce the buildup of old forest fuels.

The purpose of the wildfire analysis strategy is to assess the wildfire, outline the options for management and justify the chosen strategy. Under close supervision and using careful planning and natural containment lines, a wildfire may be allowed to burn onto the landscape naturally. However, experienced fire managers take several factors into consideration when determining the best management strategy for a wildfire.

"Major factors, like values at risk, forecasted weather and safety, play a huge role in determining the best way to manage a fire," added Brewer. "Other long-term aspects, like future prescribed fires planned for the area or mountain pine beetle infestations, must also be taken into consideration."

Not only will the natural environment benefit from this new strategy, but Albertans will benefit as well. By reducing suppression costs on wildfires that do not threaten key values, fire managers can focus more resources on wildfires close to communities and key infrastructure.

For example, in June 2009, several wildfires burned in northeastern Alberta, forcing the closure of a major highway between Fort McMurray and Edmonton and threatening several rural homes. Simultaneously, several wildfires burned north of Fort McMurray near an Ecological Wildfire Management Zone, away from key infrastructure and homes. Fire managers assessed the situation and were able to focus resources on the fires south of Fort McMurray while letting specific fires burn further north under close supervision. This allocation of resources to high priority areas allowed the highway to reopen quickly down south while renewing the forest ecosystem further north.

By weighing the options under Alberta's new wildfire management strategy, the provincial government hopes to reintroduce fire to the landscape naturally while keeping Alberta's forested communities safe. 

New program created to better support municipalities

BY DIETER LANGER, MEMP Guide Project Lead, Alberta Emergency Management Agency Emergency Management Field Officer

Under the *Emergency Management Act*, all local authorities are required to:

- establish a municipal emergency management agency,
- appoint a Director of Emergency Management and
- establish programs or plans to respond to emergencies/disasters.

Therefore, local authorities are probably familiar with the Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) template/model. MEP was established in 1995 as a planning and operations guide for Alberta municipalities.

Through stakeholder reviews it became apparent that the model needed revising. Through stakeholder consultations, Alberta municipalities advised the agency of the need for an operational tool using today's technology. Through a review process, a new program was created to better support municipalities with emergency management (EM) functions. The new user-friendly, web-based program guide is:

- operations-focused,
- based on a national standard,
- applicable to all Alberta municipalities,
- supports risk assessment-based planning,
- encourages policy formations and regional collaboration and
- allows due diligence assessments.



Participants of one of seven MEMP workshops held across Alberta.

The MEMP guide consists of three main parts:

1. The Self-Assessment-Tool (SAT) is a comprehensive questionnaire based on the national standard CSA Z1600-08 "Emergency management and business continuity programs". The SAT includes a "Supporting Document Section" with 48 procedure guides, checklist guides and policy suggestions. It also includes an "Informative Commentary Section", which

provides a reference to legislation and the standard.

2. The Municipal Emergency Plan Section comes with a complete Operations Section guide that allows the user to create and store his/her Municipal Emergency Management Plan.
3. The Reporting Section generates municipal and field officer reports after the assessments are completed.

Implementation of the MEMP Guide started in early May 2010 with seven workshops across Alberta. This is being followed by regional workshops in fall and winter to provide users with hands-on sessions. The program guide uses MA Milenet as the Internet portal, and will provide access to the guide from June 18, 2010 forward.

Starting April 1, 2012, the questionnaire will be used by AEMA field officers to review municipal emergency management plans or programs. The full transition by all municipalities to the MEMP Guide is estimated to take about three years. 🔥

For more information about the MEMP guide, please contact Dieter Langer at 780-679-1271.

Feedback from MEMP workshop

Participants speak to the significant improvements that have been made:

It was helpful that I know it can be tailored to a small municipality.

I think it will help especially small municipalities get organized and move forward.

I look forward to the Regional Guide as many of us are moving in that direction.

Program appears to be very workable. My plan has been to update. I think I will try to use this program to modify the Emergency Plan for the Village.

I am certainly excited about having an opportunity to roll this new plan out to my council and MEMP staff.

As the MEP developer for my municipality I am very impressed at the depth of information that the MEMP has attained. I am excited to get "hands on" with the template on June 17. I like the idea that this template resides within Milenet. I also like the upload features to customize my plan. Thanks for all the hard work.

Recalling Big Valley Jamboree's major weather event

BY DAVID EVANS, VE6DXX Emergency Coordinator ARES Edmonton ve6dxx@narc.net;
SUBMITTED BY CURTIS BIDULOCK, VE6AEW Section Emergency Coordinator, ARES Alberta ve6aew@aresalberta.ca

AS MANY ALBERTANS may recall, on Saturday August 1, 2009, a major weather event caused havoc at the Big Valley Jamboree near Camrose. Provided below is a perspective from another emergency management partner, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES).

ARES Edmonton was activated on August 1, 2009 by the City of Edmonton's Emergency Operations Centre (Edmonton EOC). A number of police, fire and EMS first responder units from Edmonton had been dispatched to Camrose, the site of a weather event at the Big Valley Jamboree. As first responders from many adjacent jurisdictions deployed to Camrose, the Edmonton EOC was activated to support communications and coordination. Initially it appeared that cellular communication was not available because of system overload in the Camrose area.

The request to ARES from the Edmonton EOC was for ARES Edmonton to set up a voice communications link to Camrose and if necessary provide portable coverage at the jamboree site. Within 20 minutes of the

ARES Edmonton Emergency Coordinator receiving the call from the Edmonton EOC, two voice communications links had been established. The primary link used the VE6NHB 2 metre repeater located on the CBC tower in Sherwood Park. A second backup voice link was available by linking the VE6UU node in Camrose to the VE6OG node in Edmonton using the Echolink Internet protocol.

Several ARES members were involved – Carl Gill (VE6GGG) was dispatched to activate the VE6EMS amateur radio station at the Edmonton EOC, while 'Gern' Sabourin (VE6KG) and Paul Duczynski (VE6PDD) were asked to monitor the frequency to provide assistance along with the Emergency Coordinator, David Evans (VE6DXX). Bart Vinkenborg (VE6VB) provided valuable assistance as did Jim Woodbridge (VE6MO) in Camrose. The Alberta Section Emergency Coordinator Curtis Bidulock (VE6AEW) was also alerted and later checked in to the net from his weekend home near Two Hills. Alberta Emergency Management Agency field staff and a Major Event Support Apparatus (MESA) vehicle were also deployed to assist

the City of Camrose. The Government Emergency Operation Centre (GEOC) was also activated. On this occasion the GEOC did not request communications assistance from ARES.

In the event, the backup amateur radio communications links were not required. The Camrose Fire Department reported that one person had died at the scene of the event and that some 25 people were seriously injured.

The amateur radio emergency voice net on VE6NHB was de-activated at 22:30 hours after three hours on standby. Operations Officer Mike Cook of the City of Edmonton's Office of Emergency Preparedness commented that he "was very impressed with how well the links were established ... it showed how quickly it could be accomplished". As Operations Officer he thanked all participants on behalf of the Edmonton EOC.

All ARES Edmonton members who were asked to set up and support the requested emergency communications, and VE6MO in Camrose, were thanked for their immediate support and volunteer time. 🔥



Sharing one lesson learned

An intriguing array of more than 100 educational and information sessions enlightened attendees at the 2010 NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) Conference and Expo held at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas in June. Participants were encouraged to apply the lessons learned at the event's education sessions to their areas of expertise back home. The following is an overview of one of the sessions that focused on public education and the NFPA messages.

Through the Educational Messages Advisory Committee (EMAC), which is hosted by the NFPA, a group of people are responsible for providing fire and life safety educators with accurate and consistent language for use when offering safety information to the public. These messages are used throughout NFPA's educational programs, curricula and handouts as well. The messages are categorized under subject headings such as "Smoke alarms, "Cooking", "Burns", etc., and are posted on the NFPA website at: www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1068&itemID=25474&URL=Learning/Public%20education/Educational%20Messages%20Advisory%20Committee

EMAC's responsibility for producing the NFPA's Education Messages Document (EMD) includes:

- preparing proposed fire and burn safety educational messages,
- processing and/or preparing comments to amend existing or add new educational messages,
- recommending reconfirmation,



Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Alberta Emergency Management Agency Manager of Research & Analysis at the 2010 NFPA Conference public education booth.

“Participants were encouraged to apply the lessons learned at the event's education sessions to their areas of expertise back home.”

- withdrawing or additional messages,
- maintaining the NFPA philosophy of good messaging including clear, simple, accurate, technically sound, positive messaging and
- ensuring that all messages support the most recent edition of the applicable NFPA Code or Standard.

EMAC meets annually to review NFPA's fire

safety education messages and to provide recommendations to NFPA public education staff for updating and revising the messages.

Of particular interest is the fact that anyone may submit a comment, whether or not they are a member of EMAC or NFPA.

Comments, which must be submitted to the assigned NFPA public education staff liaison, need to include the following:

- identification of the submitter and his or her affiliation,
- identification of the educational message to which the comment is directed,
- proposed text of the comment, including the wording to be added, revised (and how revised) or deleted,
- statement of the problem and substantiation for the comment,
- signature of the submitter and
- two copies of any document(s) being proposed as a reference standard or publication.

EMAC acts on all received comments by:

- accepting the comment
- rejecting the comment
- accepting the comment in principle but with changes in the proposed wording
- accepting the comment in part
- accepting the comment in principle in part by the changes in the proposed wording of the part.

Comments "accepted in principle," "accepted in part," "accepted in principle in part" and "rejected" include a statement on the reason for the EMAC action. A comment that does not include all of the information listed in "Content of Comments" may be rejected by the committee. 🔥

For more information about this committee or where and when to submit a comment for consideration, visit: www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1068&itemID=25474&URL=Safety%20Information/For%20public%20educators/Educational%20Messages%20Advisory%20Committee&cookie%5Ftest=1

Volunteer firefighters and WCB coverage

BY JENNIFER DAGSVIK, WCB Media Relations Specialist

As a volunteer firefighter, you may have questions about Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) benefits. We've compiled a list of five frequently asked coverage questions.

1. Does WCB coverage extend to volunteer firefighters?

Yes, in most instances, WCB coverage for volunteer firefighters is compulsory. According to legislation, even though volunteer firefighters in Alberta are not paid, they are still considered employees or 'workers' under the Act. If they provide service to a local government (municipality, county, improvement district or special area) and the volunteer firefighter is injured on the job, he/she is eligible to receive WCB benefits and compensation.

2. When is WCB coverage not extended?

WCB coverage is compulsory only for volunteer firefighters who are providing their services to a certain municipality or Metis settlement, not to a fire association (fire protection co-operative).

A fire association is different than a municipality or local government. These associations are non-profit organizations

that engage firefighters on a stand-by basis, completely separate from municipal governments. They often take the form of a cooperative funded by neighbouring municipalities which, according to the *Workers' Compensation Act*, classifies this industry as voluntary and therefore exempt from WCB coverage.

3. Why does WCB distinguish volunteer firefighters being different from full-time firefighters?

Full-time, front-line firefighters are regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene, while volunteer firefighters are not exposed to these hazards as frequently.


4. Why are full-time firefighters and not volunteer firefighters eligible to receive automatic benefits for presumptive cancers?

One of the key elements of the presumptive legislation is the amount of regular exposure required to meet the presumptive conditions. The shortest period of exposure is five years for primary site leukemia with the longest period being 25 years of regular exposure for primary site esophageal cancer. The Firefighters' Primary Site Cancer

Regulation (presumptive cancer legislation) only applies to full-time firefighters employed by a municipality or Metis Settlement. The Act clearly sets out these minimum exposure periods for each of the 10 presumptive cancers.

5. Why were volunteer firefighters excluded?

The decision to exclude volunteer firefighters from being eligible for presumptive cancer coverage was made when the Alberta government enacted this legislation back in 2003. At the time there were no clinical studies linking part-time firefighting to occupational cancers.

However, as with any other worker covered by WCB, if a volunteer firefighter contracts an occupational disease, and the medical information supports that it is work-related, the claim would still be adjudicated and, based on the merits of the case, he/she may be eligible for WCB compensation and benefits. 

If you have any further questions about WCB coverage, let us know. Send your questions to: jennifer.dagsvik@wcb.ab.ca. Your questions and answers will appear in the next issue.

AFRRCS update

Improving safety for first responders

Many first responders in the province are aware that Alberta's Solicitor General and Public Security department, with the assistance of Service Alberta, is working to develop an integrated, effective and secure communications system for Alberta's first responders. The Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) will improve safety for first responders (EMS, fire and police) and all Albertans.

It is intended to remove technical barriers that prevent first responders from communicating with each other in times of need. In addition, there are two large provincial radio systems in Alberta that are nearing end-of-life and require replacement. The first is the Province of Alberta

Communication System (PACS) radio system used by the RCMP; the second is the Multi Departmental Mobile Radio System (MDMRS) radio system used by the Government of Alberta.

Service Alberta released a Request for Proposal (RFP) in 2008 and evaluated the responses it received. None of the original submissions met all of the mandatory requirements established by Alberta's first responders. However, as a result of the AFRRCS RFP, a modified RFP process was invoked in the fall of 2009 to allow vendors to clarify and modify their submissions. The second round of this modified RFP process closed January 15, 2010 and two vendor submissions were received.

Before the evaluation of those submissions was complete, a new Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security took office and requested a ministerial scope review to ensure Albertans were receiving solid value for the tax dollars being spent on the project.

The AFRRCS project team is pleased to report that the scope review has now been completed and the evaluation is proceeding. A team representing first responder agencies and stakeholders from across the province has been assembled to review and score the proposals. The current schedule calls for the identification of the preferred vendor in the early fall with contract finalization to follow. 

Another member of the emergency management team

OLDS SEARCH AND RESCUE SOCIETY is a community-based ground Search and Rescue (SAR) organization trained for both urban and rural settings.

The idea of forming a volunteer agency within the Town of Olds that would be trained and ready to assist in case of an emergency began in 1989. The town provided the initial funding to give life to “The Olds Emergency Response Team” in January 1990, with a mandate to assist police, fire and ambulance as required. Training in first aid, emergency evacuation, reception centre operation and search and rescue were undertaken. Over the next 10 years, the group demonstrated its value on many occasions.

In Spring 2001, members began the process of expanding the mandate by taking training in search and rescue fundamentals. In January 2002, the group officially changed its name to Olds Search and Rescue (OSAR). At the March 2003 annual meeting of Search and Rescue Alberta, the Olds group was given full membership in SAR Alberta and added to the vast search and rescue resources located in Alberta. Currently, there are approximately 40 members in the OSAR group.



One of the Hug-A-Tree and Survive class presentations.

Our mission is that Olds Search and Rescue will train for and respond in a professional manner to the RCMP’s request for assistance in handling search and rescue emergencies, and be a resource to the Town of Olds, County of Mountain View and the Province of Alberta.

We search for missing persons and provide first aid and crowd control for community events. OSAR is set up as an emergency response team to serve the community in disasters, evacuations and highway closures. We encourage preventative search and rescue by providing our “Trip Planner” document to anyone going out into the back country.

OSAR also provides a “Hug-A-Tree and Survive” presentation to all Grade 3 classes in 16 different schools (approximately 700 school students), Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and youth and church groups in the Mountain View, Red Deer and Kneehill Counties.

The program is provided to schools and youth groups about how to avoid getting lost and the serious consequences if a child should become lost. “We teach children how to be comfortable and survive should they become lost and how to be located easily and quickly by Search and Rescue,” said Myrna Dawson, Hug-A-Tree and Survive assistant.

The Hug-A-Tree and Survive training is designed to provide children and youth groups with the tools to avoid becoming lost in the wilderness, and the confidence to make wise decisions and stay safe should they become lost.

Main instructor Jack Humphries and assistant instructor Myrna Dawson, along with other members of OSAR, provide a one-hour presentation, using props and video, to highlight the importance of not panicking should you become lost, as the greatest fear a person of any age can have is of being alone.



The presentation shows that hugging a tree or other stationary object and even talking to it calms the child down and prevents panic. By staying in one place, the child is likely to be found far more rapidly. It also reduces the possibility of injury and



Some of the props used to educate students about the Hug-A-Tree and Survive program.

death. The presentation also teaches the importance of always carrying an orange trash bag and a whistle, granola bar and water on a hiking or camping trip. It is explained that the bag is highly visible and by making a hole to the side of the bag 10 cm

from the bottom corner for the face and putting it on over the head will keep the child dry and warm. With the use of dolls and a spray water bottle we show how moisture and coldness leads to hypothermia. We explain why the bag is not a toy but to be used in the case of emergencies. It is demonstrated that a whistle is louder than the child's voice and takes less energy to use. Three blasts mean SOS (I need help). A person can only live three days without water but can survive 21 days without food so water is very important. A demonstration is also done using tin foil and a towel where the child can

make footprints. We ask the student to make footprints and have his name and date on the tin foil so as to enable our trackers to locate them should they become lost.

We supply the classes with a survival kit consisting of a granola bar, fox 40 whistle and an orange garbage bag wrapped in a colouring book along with a letter to the parents explaining the Hug-A-Tree and Survive program. We also include additional information that might be helpful in preventing the child from becoming lost in the first place and the importance of calling the police quickly, as a lost child is an emergency and

searchers need to be on the scene before sign evidence is destroyed. Prior to the classroom presentations, an evening is organized when the kits are assembled by the OSAR members.

The Hug-A-Tree and Survive program is provided through donations from private and corporate entities as well as the Olds Search and Rescue Society, which enables OSAR to supply children with materials (survival kits) free of charge. The instructions are given by OSAR members as part of its preventative search and rescue agenda.

"This year, OSAR members attended 16 different schools and instructed over 650 students," added Jack Humphries, OSAR Vice President and Hug-A-Tree main instructor. "We are now in the process of contacting various campgrounds in the central Alberta area in hopes of presenting this program there as well."

Comments received validate that the program is working. For example, in 2009 assistant instructor Myrna Dawson was stopped at the local grocery store by a woman who wanted to express her gratitude for OSAR instruction provided to Grade 3 students in the Didsbury school. As she explained it, one weekend the family went camping and ensured their child had his survival kit (supplied by OSAR) with him before he went looking around the campsite. Sure enough, the child became lost. As per usual, the family started looking for him before calling in the RCMP. Within 90 minutes, the child's parents located the child waving his orange garbage bag and blowing his whistle. The mother stated that she never thought that the survival kit would work as well as it had. She couldn't thank OSAR members enough for taking the time to teach students these valuable life saving lessons. 🔥

"...Myrna Dawson was stopped at the local grocery store by a woman who wanted to express her gratitude for OSAR instruction provided to Grade 3 students in the Didsbury school."

For more information about the organization or the Hug-A-Tree and Survive program, visit www.osar.ca or call current President Don Larson @ 403-507-0070; Vice President (and Hug-A-Tree & Survive instructor) Jack Humphries @ 403-556-6775; or Secretary (and Hug-A-Tree & Survive assistant instructor) Myrna Dawson @ 403-507-2402 (residence) or 403-586-0354 (cell).

The difference 10 minutes makes

BY KEVAN D. JESS, Chief Fire Administrator, Safety Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs

ONE SET OF RECENT amendments to the Alberta Building Code 2006, which took effect May 3, 2009, has created a great deal of confusion for code officials, developers and fire departments. These are the changes to the “10 Minute Rules”.

“Part 9 – Housing and Small Buildings” of the 1981 Alberta Building Code created a formal recognition in code language that structures located where fire suppression forces could not arrive within 10 minutes of notification required some means of reducing the speed and likelihood that a fire originating in one structure would spread to adjacent buildings. The options to provide this protection included non-combustible cladding and reduced unprotected opening (doors & windows) area, increased spatial separation (limiting distance) or sprinklering.

These provisions had been inconsistently understood, interpreted and applied across the province since 1981 and were the partial subject of an Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) resolution at the 2006 convention. They were also one of the topics of concern for the High Intensity Residential Fires Working Group formed by Alberta Municipal Affairs in summer 2007.

Previous wording (prior to the May 2009 amendment) had been interpreted differently by each municipality such that the start of the 10 minutes could be at the time the:

- 911 call was received at a Public Safety Answer Point,
- call was transferred to a fire dispatcher,
- call was received or transferred to an on-call firefighter,
- fire dispatcher initiated a station/unit call or page or
- fire apparatus left the hall.

HIRF Amendments

Following the release of the High Intensity Residential Fires Working Group report on October 31, 2007, a number of amendments were considered by the Government of Alberta and were adopted by regulation on March 11, 2009. Those related to the 10 minute rules (before and after amendment) are listed below. The original Alberta Building Code 2006 wording had been essentially unchanged since 1981.

Alberta Building Code 2006 prior to amendments effective May 3, 2009

9.10.14. SPATIAL SEPARATION BETWEEN BUILDINGS

9.10.14.3. Limiting Distance where Firefighting Facilities are Inadequate

- 1) The limiting distance required by Article 9.10.14.4. shall be doubled where firefighting facilities and protective wetting facilities are not available within 10 minutes of an alarm being received by the fire department.

9.10.15. SPATIAL SEPARATION BETWEEN HOUSES

9.10.15.3. Limiting Distance where Firefighting Facilities are Inadequate

- 1) The limiting distance required by Article 9.10.15.4. shall be doubled where firefighting facilities and protective wetting facilities are not available within 10 minutes of an alarm being received by the fire department.

Alberta Building Code 2006 amendments effective May 3, 2009

9.10.14. SPATIAL SEPARATION BETWEEN BUILDINGS

9.10.14.3. Limiting Distance where Firefighting Facilities are Inadequate

- 1) Except for the purpose of applying Sentences 9.10.14.4.(2), (8) and (9), and Sentence 9.10.14.5.(8), a limiting distance equal to half the actual limiting distance shall be used as input to the requirements of this Subsection, where
 - a) the time from receipt of notification of a fire by the fire department until the first fire department vehicle capable of beginning suppression activities arrives at the building is greater than 10 minutes in not less than 10% of all calls to the building, and
 - b) any storey in the building is not sprinklered.

9.10.15. SPATIAL SEPARATION BETWEEN HOUSES

9.10.15.3. Limiting Distance where Firefighting Facilities are Inadequate

- 1) Except for the purpose of applying Sentence 9.10.15.5.(1), a limiting distance equal to half the actual limiting distance shall be used as input to the requirements of this Subsection, where
 - a) the time from receipt of notification of a fire by the fire department until the first fire department vehicle capable of beginning suppression activities arrives at the building is greater than 10 minutes in not less than 10% of all calls to the building, and
 - b) any storey in the building is not sprinklered.

Similar wording is anticipated in the upcoming 2010 edition of the National Building Code, which is due out in November this year.

As such, the start time on the 10 minute “clock” could, in some departments, be delayed by as much as 5 to 7 minutes or more. In the meantime, any fire would continue to grow with no regard as to when the “clock” started.

In addition, the interpretation of when this “clock” stopped ranged from the time:

- the first officer’s vehicle arrived on the scene,
- any apparatus with some fire suppression capability arrived,
- a rated pumper/engine with a crew arrived on scene or
- that a pumper/engine crew was able to apply water to the fire.

In reality, many fire departments were unaware of the 10 minute rule and, until the adoption of standardized 911 and computer-aided dispatch systems, many had no consistent methods in place to track the time when any of these activities occurred. In addition, across Alberta, very few municipalities had established and mapped the 10 minute response zone boundaries. Where the 10 minute arrival was considered by officials the assumptions, plans and decisions were often made based on little empirical data.

The purpose of these amendments was to clarify these requirements in order to provide consistent start and stop times to the “clock”. This meant that construction and development in all Alberta municipalities would be treated the same. The wording “time from receipt of notification of a fire by a fire department” and “first fire department vehicle capable of beginning suppression activities arrives” was thought to be considerably more empirical and measurable than the language in previous versions of the Alberta Building Code. A further interpretation and clarification of the current wording is available in Building Code Interpretation (06-BCI-025) which can be accessed at: <http://municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/ss/STANDATA/building/bci/06BCI025.pdf>

The result is that the time from notification to arrival is from the time the call for assistance is first handled by a fire department dispatcher until the first rated engine/pumper with a crew of firefighters arrives.

While 10 minutes has been deemed as a reasonable timeframe for suppression intervention to protect a structure based on National Research Council research, it must be remembered that this does not include the time for a fire to grow from ignition, to discovery, to a call to an emergency number. Delayed detection and notification will always negatively impact successful suppression and prevention of fire spread.

What these amended ABC 06 articles mean is that where the fire department is unable to arrive within 10 minutes in 9 out of 10 instances, and the building is not sprinklered, the building must be

constructed as if the limiting distance (generally the distance to property lines) was half as much as what actually existed. In these locations this would involve increasing the spatial separation or the application of non-combustible materials on the sidewalls and a reduction in the area of unprotected openings (windows and doors).

Some solutions for buildings outside the 10 minute response maps (described in the bulletin) include the use of exterior grade gypsum under vinyl siding, cementitious siding boards or stucco and sprinklering.

Fire departments are encouraged to work within the guidelines in 06-BCI-05 to develop 10 minute response maps for their municipalities and communicate these to their development and building officials. The Standata suggests the use of a combination of historical incident response data, test travel times at various times (with a combination of traffic and weather conditions) and computer modelling to develop a 10 minute response expectation map.

It should be noted that a Ministerial Exemption has been issued which allows municipalities to choose to use their past defined policies and practices when calculating fire department response times. This could result in buildings within the previously calculated 10 minute area but outside the response area calculated using the new code wording not being required to reduce the unprotected opening area (all other requirements apply) on lots which are registered by Land Titles prior to December 31, 2010. Full information on the exemption can be found at: www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/ss/Ten-minuteRuleExemption.pdf 🔥

NOTE: Please call Alberta Municipal Affairs – Safety Services at 1-866-421-6929 with any questions or inquiries on this or any other matter relating to the Alberta Fire Code and Alberta Building Code.

“Fire departments are encouraged to work within the guidelines in 06-BCI-05 to develop 10 minute response maps for their municipalities and communicate these to their development and building officials.”

All in a day's work?

AS MOST ALBERTANS are aware, the staff at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) are trained to deal with a diverse range of situations, from severe storms to man-made threats and actions. Those are the headline grabbing stories. However, on any given day, AEMA staff also come across less publicized events that also require their expertise. Provided below are two such recent incidents.

On April 8, 2010, Tom Harnos, Fire Field Officer with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, was travelling south on Highway 2 from Edmonton to Calgary. The weather started with rain in Red Deer but quickly turned into an aggressive spring snowstorm as he neared the area between Olds and Didsbury. Then, just outside of Didsbury between 18:00 and 19:00 hours, the storm became a complete whiteout, causing the wet highway to ice over and visibility to decrease to almost nothing. That's when Tom became involved in a multi-vehicle collision.

"I was able to see several brake lights come on in front of me, so I began to slow down. As I came closer to the brake lights, I noticed that it was a large vehicle collision involving passenger vehicles, commercial transport trucks and a passenger bus," said Harnos. "I knew this could become much worse with

more vehicles approaching so I activated my recently-installed emergency lighting. Fearing a rear-end collision, I pulled my vehicle next to one of the tractor-trailer units already stopped at the collision. In my side mirror, I watched as a tractor-trailer unit jack-knifed and slid sideways toward me, dragging several passenger vehicles with it. Then, everything seemed to stop. Luckily, I was unhurt and my vehicle suffered no damage. I notified the Agency Response Readiness Centre (ARRC) about the collision, then put on my protective gear and helmet and proceeded to triage vehicles for level of injuries."


With the storm still at full gale, Tom made his way through the tangled mess, knocking on windows to check on occupants. Several vehicles did not have glass, leaving the occupants exposed to the elements. Tom directed those people to seek shelter in the passenger bus for warmth and protection.

"I managed to make my way through the entire scene as emergency vehicles began to show up. I gave a brief size-up of the situation to the first incoming emergency crews," added Harnos. As crews worked on the more seriously damaged vehicles, Tom continued to offer assistance to those involved. As the scene became more organized and non-injured victims

were moving to the bus, Tom was asked if he would assist in another capacity. Due to the large number of victims in the collision and not enough ambulances, the scene commander asked Tom if he could drive a young family to the hospital for assessment. The female member was pregnant and was suffering from minor stress due to the collision. Her husband and young child were uninjured.

"Feeling comfortable with her condition, due to my assessment of her and 22 years as an EMT, I assisted the family to the Peter Lougheed Hospital. The drive to the hospital didn't exceed 30 kilometres per hour due to the severity of the storm and the icy roads," noted Harnos.

The story does have a happy ending – the mother was assessed and given a clean bill of health after a night at the hospital and there were no life-threatening injuries among the passengers of the 54-70 vehicles involved in the collision.

"What was going to be a four-hour drive home ended up being a 12-hour adventure," recalled Harnos. "Throughout it, though, the ARRC, the duty manager/officer and my south and south-central partners all called to assist and confirm my status at the scene. That is what team work is all about." 

Rescue at the Blood Reserve

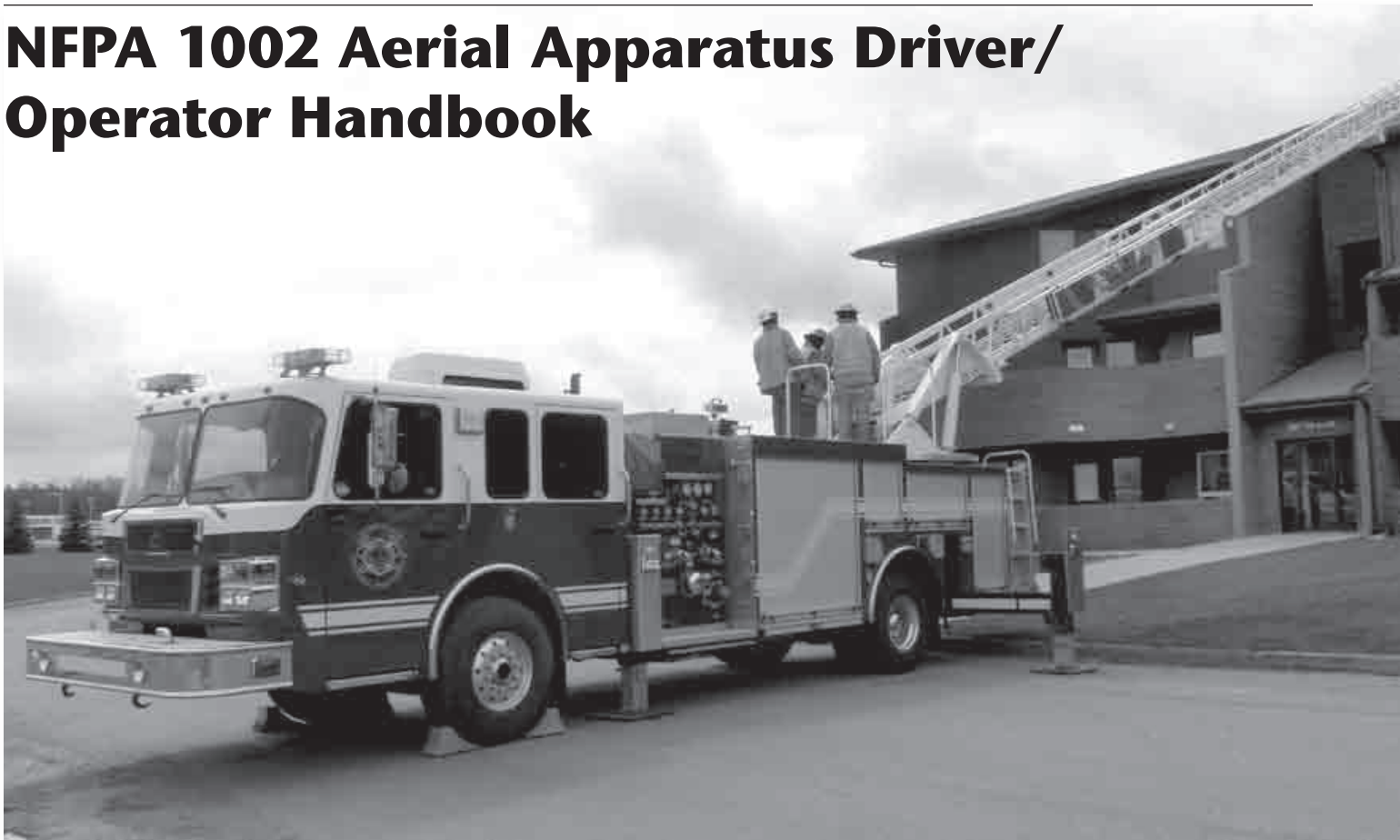
On June 18, 2010, Blood Tribe Emergency Services were called to rescue two families from the flooding and high waters on the north end of the Blood Reserve. The first rescue was a smaller feed stream approximately 100 metres across, feeding into St. Mary's River. Two adults and two children were successfully rescued by emergency services with their 12-foot Zodiac. However, the second rescue did not go as well.

It was also a secondary feed into St. Mary's River but the water was a lot swifter and narrower. The crew prepared for the rescue by throwing a rope across to the two adults on the other side of the stream, getting them to fasten the rope around a sturdy fence post and then securing the rope on their side of the stream. The intent was that this rope would be used to guide the Zodiac across the stream. The plan was to send one rescuer across to the victims and bring them across one at a time. Unfortunately, though, as the Zodiac got about half way across, it was flipped over by the current, which caused the rescuer to become submerged into the water. As the second rescuer started to run along

the shore, he lost his footing and also fell into the swift moving waters. At that point, Jacen Abrey, Fire Safety Officer with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, quickly grabbed a throw bag and deployed it out to the first victim. However, she was unable to see the rope as she had lost her glasses when the boat over-turned. "As I ran down the banks all I could think of was to throw the line again and give it a flip like I was going to catch the heel of a calf," said Abrey. "I was fortunate enough that it worked. The rope wrapped around her right arm, so I planted myself deep into the mud as the current was now starting to drag me in. As I did this, I flipped the rope to the other rescuer to grab a hold of the line. As I looked up, I was able to see that both victims were drifting to shore. All I could think was, 'Thank You God!'"

For both Tom Harnos and Jacen Abrey, thanks to their experience, training and quick thinking they were in the right place at the right time, with the right skills to turn these two scenarios from potential tragedies to happy endings. All in a day's work for AEMA staff.

NFPA 1002 Aerial Apparatus Driver/Operator Handbook



An aerial in operation during the Lesser Slave Lake pilot.

In keeping with the strategy of formal adoption of emergency management system training curriculum, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency has approved the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) “Aerial Apparatus Driver Operator Handbook”

“Feedback from the participants on the contents of the manual, layout, ease of usage and examination criteria were very positive.”



Second Edition as acceptable curriculum to take provincial certification examinations for Aerial Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications.

This approval came about after conducting two pilot projects at the Strathcona County Emergency Services Department and the Slave Lake Fire Department. The success rate was 100% with an average mark of 86%. Feedback from the participants on the contents of the manual, layout, ease of usage and examination criteria were very positive. 🔥

Ready to help those in need!

BY KEN HOFFER, MSW, Business Continuity & Recovery Planner, Disaster Social Services, Calgary Emergency Management Agency

I looked into the eyes of the 10 year old boy who had just finished translating my message into Spanish, informing his parents and older cousin that their condo had indeed been destroyed in the fire and that they were among the almost 300 homeless after the huge blaze. His cousin was holding her baby close, and a tear tracked down her cheek as she listened. I thanked the boy, and his parents managed a weak nod to me as I introduced one of my colleagues who would help the family plan for their next steps. I then moved on to check on another family at the reception centre.

This scene is repeated more often than we like across Alberta. Each municipality in Alberta is required under the Emergency Management Act to provide disaster services for its citizens. A vital component of this obligation to Albertans are Disaster Social Service (DSS) programs. DSS is founded in a community development philosophy where municipalities work closely with local non-governmental

organizations (NGO) and other community partners to develop and maintain a comprehensive plan that includes the provision of food, clothing, lodging and personal services in order to care for people evacuated during an emergency or disaster.

DSS is a planned emergency preparedness, response and recovery program intended to meet the immediate and longer term survival and psycho-social needs of individuals and communities impacted by a disaster. Each year, communities across Alberta experience a variety of natural and man-made emergencies and disasters such as fires, tornadoes, winter storms, dangerous goods spills, transportation collisions and industrial accidents.

Although disasters may cause destruction to the physical environment, they primarily affect people. Lives may be lost, people injured, homes destroyed and families dislocated. The resulting human grief, as well as the social and economic disruptions,

affect individuals, families and the community as a whole. In the early stages of an emergency or disaster, there may be many people displaced from their place of residence for short or extended periods of time. As the event progresses, recovery needs must then be addressed as timely as possible. To meet the broad range of evacuee needs, DSS teams in the affected or receiving community might establish a reception centre to deliver the following evacuee services:

- registration and inquiry,
- family reunification,
- medical assistance,
- food, clothing, lodging,
- information on recovery assistance such as insurance issues and
- personal services such as crisis intervention, counselling and pet care.

These direct services are supported by DSS teams providing logistics, volunteer and donations planning, communications, administration and financial tracking.

The Disaster Social Services Provincial Network was established in 2002 to support the exchange of ideas and resources between organizations and individuals involved in delivering DSS programs across the province. The network is comprised of members from across Alberta and meets bi-annually. The network also conducts regular teleconferences, shares lessons learned from emergency responses and plans the annual Provincial DSS Forum, which this year is being held on November 8th in Edmonton.

We hope to see many of you at the DSS Provincial Forum in Edmonton on November 8th. For more information, contact one of the people listed in the box to the left.

Feel free to contact any of our current Network members:

Scott Cameron, City of Red Deer – Scott.Cameron@reddeer.ca

Cheryl Cooper, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo – Cheryl.Cooper@woodbuffalo.ab.ca

Penny Fox, Smokey River – srfcss@telus.net

Ken Hoffer, City of Calgary – Ken.Hoffer@calgary.ca

Rick Kanik, City of Calgary – Rick.Kanik@calgary.ca

Donelda Laing, City of Grande Prairie – dlaing@cityofgp.com

Dean McKellar, City of Edmonton – Dean.McKellar@edmonton.ca

Jack McKendry, Alberta Employment and Immigration – Jack.McKendry@gov.ab.ca

Sandi Misselbrook, NGO Council – Sandi.Misselbrook@stjohn.ab.ca

Diane Randell, City of Lethbridge – Diane.Randell@lethbridge.ca

Bonnie Stearns, City of Red Deer – Bonnie.Stearns@reddeer.ca

Varley Weisman, City of Medicine Hat – varwei@medicinehat.ca

Over the past eight years, the network has raised the profile of DSS within the provincial disaster response system, established the DSS provincial forum and improved the DSS planning in municipalities across the province by sharing best practices and information. A day-long strategic planning session was recently held in Calgary, where members discussed many challenges facing DSS including:


- while DSS programs enjoy a close relationship with funding programs such as Family and Community Support Services, funding issues often arise due to differing funding allocation and evaluation standards and
- while DSS needs to be seen as an integral part of emergency preparedness, response and recovery, the delivery of DSS programs can benefit greatly from increased standardization and coordination across the province. Current

variations in standards and training in each municipality and among NGO service providers can often lead to friction during a response and may hamper service delivery to evacuees.

The strategic planning session produced a detailed work plan that will help to support the network's vision of a DSS training, preparedness, response and recovery environment in which coordinated and consistent services are delivered to the highest standard to support Albertans. We strive to ensure that all Albertans are prepared for and cared for when disaster strikes and our communities are prepared to provide Albertans with the best services possible.

With this vision in mind, you have most likely heard by now of the provincial Fire and Emergency Services Training Initiative (FESTI), whose purpose is to improve access to training by emergency

response personnel at the community and government level. The initiative will be executed within the context of agreements, relationships and strategies with local, provincial and national agencies. It will also include a review and alignment of accreditation, standards and certification; review and implementation of training standards; and the creation of a provincial study centre.

In working to achieve our strategic plan and vision, the DSS Provincial Network plans to play a key role in the development of FESTI, and we welcome your support and any questions you may have. As such, we are also looking to expand our network to ensure that all communities have access to DSS program information. We are eager to ensure that your voice is heard in the development of FESTI and the continual improvement of DSS services for all Albertans. 

2010 FPW sneak preview

Start planning now for annual October event

AS MOST ALBERTANS KNOW, October is Fire Prevention Week, a time to focus on fire prevention. The theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week, which takes place October 3 - 9, 2010, is "Smoke Alarms - a sound you can live with".

Each year, Fire Prevention Week is promoted by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and local fire and emergency services, with the support of corporate sponsor ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric. It is an opportunity to reach out to Albertans and increase their awareness about fire education and prevention.

Fire Prevention Week started as a way to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, which killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres.

Alberta's 2010 FPW campaign includes a campaign kit with various fire prevention articles, statistical information and a message from the AEMA Managing Director

and the Alberta Fire Commissioner. The kit, which will be available at www.aema.gov.ab.ca by the end of August, will be distributed to Alberta media and fire and emergency services across Alberta.

There will also be a children's program for grades K to 3, in partnership with ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric. This includes a children's activity book that is newly created each year, a contest entry to win a provincial grand prize plus materials for classroom teachers and caregivers as well as instructions on implementing the program locally.

The AEMA will also be partnering with the Calgary Fire Department to coordinate a media kick-off event to officially mark the beginning of Fire Prevention Week 2010.

Every year, the AEMA also hosts a contest for members of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper

Key dates to keep in mind are:

June 15 – deadline for fire services to order children's activity booklets


August 15 – campaign kit posted on AEMA website

September 1 – distribute campaign kit to AWNA and other media

August 15 – mail out of children's program materials to fire services

October 3 - 9 – Fire Prevention Week

Association to encourage newspapers to promote fire safety in creative and visible ways, such as through a special fire safety section/supplement.

Other activities planned for the 2010 Fire Prevention Week include media interviews by the Fire Commissioner and agency staff, a paid advertisement in Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association (AWNA) papers, fire safety messages displayed on road-side electronic boards, a news release from Alberta Municipal Affairs Communications Branch, public service announcements, a post-campaign fire services survey and an article in *Alberta On Scene* magazine. 



BY CHAD SARTISON, Volunteer Firefighter, Chairman, *The Fire Within* – chad@thefirewithin.ca

IN A JOB AS STEEPED in tradition as the fire service, our stories are more than history – they are our future. As firefighters, our stories are our anchors.

When times get tough, they remind us why we joined and keep us here when we don't think we have anything left to give.

Edward F. Croker said, "When a man becomes a fireman, his greatest act of bravery has been accomplished." I also happen to believe this was our purest moment as firefighters. It was when money didn't matter and to us any old fire truck was shiny, SCBAs were light as a feather and the hand-me-down bunker gear didn't stink a bit ... at least not to us!

When we first joined, we looked nowhere but out of the hall toward the people we wanted to help. We even naively yearned for the tones. But inevitably as time goes on, the rust on the truck becomes apparent, the air packs get heavier and gear really does stink. Before we know it, we are immersed in the business of firefighting.

With recruitment and retention looming as the most pressing issues facing the volunteer service today and some volunteer fire departments preparing to celebrate their 200th anniversary, our generation holds a tremendous responsibility to ensure that we celebrate 200 more. So, with solutions lying farther than the political will to address them, the question must be asked: what do we do in the meantime?

I say we fall back on our stories. We concentrate on why we joined and why we stay. Perhaps more importantly, we share these stories with the public we serve, for it is our stories that will pull them in, inspire them to volunteer and motivate them to support our efforts. So for my part, I would like to share two stories with you.

The first is a story of recruitment.

I have travelled across Canada and through much of the United States speaking in front of and visiting with thousands of volunteer firefighters, yet one story for me stands above all and, ironically, it comes from my very own fire department.

I remember it being a chilly morning. I rarely scan my fire radio. I don't believe we hear much good news on it, but this morning for whatever reason, I was.

Our neighbouring department's tones went off. The chilling update from dispatch indicated that a young child had been viciously struck down by a speeding car as he innocently tried to get on his bus to school.

You could hear the stress in my friends' voices as the inevitability of such a tragedy grew apparent. I remember feeling relieved that the accident was just outside of our area and was therefore not our call. I turned the radio off and felt terribly unsettled for the rest of the day as I tried to put what I had heard behind me.

It was about six months later when one of our firefighters came to me on a training night and said that his neighbour was coming to join. He cautioned me not to say anything, as his neighbour was the father of the boy who had passed away on that call. I was immediately nervous to meet him and privately questioned myself on what could have brought him here and if he could be a good firefighter.

“It's almost ironic that, at a time when I felt most empty, all I wanted to do was to give something back to my community. I think it was a reflection of what I was receiving from the people around me.”

As time passed, he grew to be a great firefighter and we grew to be friends. I would like to read an excerpt from an email he sent me when I recently questioned him about his intentions.

“I honestly wonder how many people know that they're protected by volunteers. When I moved from Calgary, I never gave this a moment's thought. I never expected to need any help from emergency services and was never challenged to think about it.

Then my son was killed. The first people on the scene were from the Turner Valley Fire Department. I can tell you that I was never so happy to see another person as I was when Glen appeared in the doorway of the bus and asked if he could help with CPR.

I realized afterward that these guys were just dads like me, trying to do their best to help the people around them. I knew then that I had to become a volunteer myself, and the rest is history.

Had that accident not happened, I'm pretty sure that I would have blissfully continued on unaware of the fact that when an emergency occurs, it's volunteers who will be arriving at the scene. If more people knew this truth, our attitudes might be different.

It's almost ironic that, at a time when I felt most empty, all I wanted to do was to give something back to my community. I think it was a reflection of what I was receiving from the people around me. I have never regretted becoming a volunteer and I am proud to help in any small way that I can."

Wilf joined the volunteer fire service to ensure that his son Brandon lives in our memories. I suspect Wilf's actions will in some way give Brandon life as Wilf strives to help where others helped him.

This is Wilf's story of recruitment.

Fortunately my story of recruitment is not nearly as compelling, but from time to time when the trucks look a little rusty and the BA is getting a little heavy, I borrow Wilf's story for inspiration. Wilf to me epitomizes what it is to be a volunteer firefighter and I will always strive to live up to Wilf's story.

The second story is my story of retention.

It all started with a forced visit to the doctor by my new department chief, who was adamant that when I switched from my first department in Longview, Alberta to his in Priddis I had to have a physical.

As a healthy, fit guy I protested, but he was relentless and that is where I had what my doctor affectionately calls a "BTW" day. BTW is an acronym for "By the Way". My By The Way Day was By The Way – you have cancer.

On June 15, 2006, I was diagnosed with advanced testicular cancer and one day later was in the hospital for surgery. The surgery was deemed a success. I had a new nickname and a shirt that I wear when I golf that says, "Has anybody seen my ball?" All was good, or so I thought.

It was five months later during a monthly checkup at the Tom Baker Cancer Clinic when I heard the words, "I am afraid we have found something and we do not like what we see." The doctor explained to me that the cancer had spread to the lymph nodes in my back and there was a suspected spot on my lung. I remember the doctor saying with a forced smile on his face, "It's the same cancer Lance Armstrong had, and he survived."

I remember thinking, are you kidding me? Lance Armstrong is arguably the most physically and mentally gifted athlete who has ever walked the face of the earth. Show me a short, fat guy from Moose Jaw who survived this and now we are talking.

Once again, the path was swift. I went in for chemotherapy three days later. I had a choice of a three-drug treatment for a shorter three cycles or a two-drug treatment for a longer four cycles. The risk with the shorter three was that I could never go on

compressed air again because of possible damage to my lungs. I was a firefighter so the choice was simple – it was the longer four-cycle treatment for me.

I don't recall ever being as scared as I was when the nurse spiked the bag and I watched the chemo slowly make its way through the IV, inch-by-inch, to my arm.

It's now 2010 and I have been cancer-free for three years. The life I never thought I would live is again the norm and the cancer is a memory. The irony of the story is that the fire service saved my life. If it were not for that physical forced by my new fire chief, I likely would not have discovered the cancer in time.

I joined the fire service to give back to my community and to make a difference. I had always thought I had a lifetime to make that difference and it had never occurred to me that a lifetime could be a sliding scale.

I now stay in the fire service to make a difference to my fellow firefighters. If I am not there, someone has to work a little harder to cover my place. That's my story of retention and I guess the inspiration behind The Fire Within.

These are my stories. What are yours? Share them with your community and your fellow firefighters and 200 years from now I guarantee you that we volunteer firefighters will still be sharing stories. 🔥

Digest

Source for hazard information

If you've ever wondered how Alberta's hazards compare against another province in Canada, visit <http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/environment/naturalhazards>.

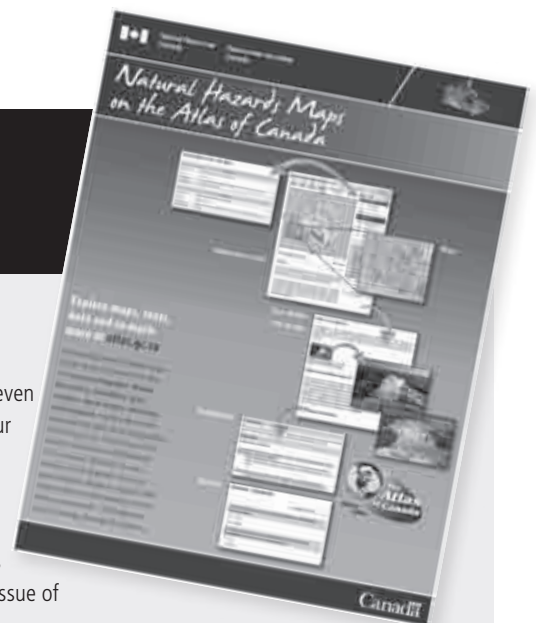
Here you'll find the Natural Hazard pages on the Atlas of Canada website. It includes earthquakes,

floods, forest fires, landslides, space weather, storm surges, volcanoes and tsunamis. Learn about each hazard, its location and likelihood of occurrence.

The site also includes case studies and photographs of past Canadian disasters plus information to better

prepare you for future occurrences. There are even quizzes to challenge your knowledge.

Stay tuned for more information about this site and natural hazards in the November 2010 issue of *Alberta On Scene*. 🔥



►► Continued from cover.

and solutions we have found. Topics included integrated Fire and EMS service delivery, integrated dispatch, labour management relations in the fire service, recruitment of part-time (volunteer) firefighters and the challenges of multi-agency communications at large scale emergencies.” 🔥

“...a chance to get up close and personal with firefighter equipment.”



Minister Goudreau getting geared up.



Minister Goudreau and his Executive Assistant, Wendy Rodgers.

Alberta On Scene is published by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency for the information of fire/emergency management professionals and others with a related interest in this field.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of AEMA or the Government of Alberta. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged.

The contents of *Alberta On Scene* may be reproduced with the appropriate credit to the source. The editorial office of *Alberta On Scene* is located at:

Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Suite 2810, 10303 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3N6

Phone: 780-422-9000

Fax: 780-644-1044

Email: aema@gov.ab.ca