

Alberta On Scene



FOR PARTNERS IN FIRE AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

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NOVEMBER 2010

Helping out in Chillan, Chile

Making a difference... pictures tell the story

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, we published an article about St. Albert firefighter Victor Fernandez and the efforts made to provide donated equipment to fire departments in South America. Since that time, Victor has continued his efforts and made several trips to poor countries. His latest mission, to Chillan, Chile in May 2010, also included Alberta Fire Commissioner Trent West, fellow St. Albert firefighter Lyall Hutchinson and emergency services and technical leader for Dow Chemical, Ed van Delden.

Although a planned mission to Chillan, Chile was delayed by a month due to a devastating 8.8 earthquake that rocked the area on February 27, 2010, that didn't dampen the spirits of the volunteers taking part in the mission. If anything, it made organizer Victor Fernandez even more anxious to get to the community and see for himself what damage occurred.

Continued on page 20 ►►



Victor Fernandez and Lyall Hutchinson inside the sea container packed with donated items.



The two donated fire trucks arrived safely in Chile.

This is the 8th issue of *Alberta On Scene*.
Let us know what you think, write to:
aema@gov.ab.ca

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Adjusting to changes

AS I'M SURE, MANY OF YOU have heard, Dave Hodgins has resigned from his position as Managing Director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. While we adjust to the changes that this creates, we want to wish Dave the very best with his future endeavors.

The agency has grown tremendously since its inception in 2006. It has become a highly effective and well-tuned organization that plays a significant role in the care and safety of Albertans.

We are most fortunate to have well-qualified and professional staff across all sectors of our organization who continually put their heart and soul into the agency's day-to-day operations. I know that this effort will continue and together we will maintain the effectiveness and functionality of the agency.



Trent R. West

“The agency has grown tremendously since its inception in 2006.”

Most importantly, I want to assure you that AEMA will continue to serve under its legislated mandate and responsibility to coordinate, cooperate, collaborate and communicate within the Government of Alberta and to our many and diverse stakeholders. 🔥

Trent R. West
*Acting Managing Director, Fire Commissioner
Alberta Emergency Management Agency*

Clarifying issues related to Bill C-36 and the Product Safety Program

As you may be aware, the purpose of the proposed *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA)* is to protect the public by addressing or preventing dangers to human health or safety that are posed by consumer products, including those made in and that circulate within Canada and those that are imported. This would further protect the health and safety of Canadians.

A Bill C-36 Roundtable was held on July 27, 2010 in Edmonton, Alberta. The Minister of Health, Ms. Leona Aglukkaq explained aspects of the proposed CCPSA with stakeholders who are interested in consumer product safety. The new *Act* would:

- prohibit the manufacture, importation, advertisement or sale of any consumer products that pose an unreasonable danger to human health or safety;
- require industry to report when they know about a serious incident, or death, related to their product to provide government with timely information about important product safety issues;
- require manufacturers or importers to provide test/study results on products when asked;
- allow Health Canada to recall dangerous consumer products;
- make it an offence to package or label consumer products that make false or deceptive health or safety claims, including false certification marks;
- require companies to retain documents to help trace products throughout the supply chain; and
- raise fines and penalties for non-compliance.

For frequently asked questions on Bill C-36, please see www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/legislation/acts-lois/ccpsa-lcspc/qa-qr-eng.php.

Carlie Watson, Regional Manager, Product Safety Program, provided further information to Roundtable participants on the Product Safety Program:

Cyclical Enforcement Program

One way Health Canada ensures products are safe on the marketplace is through our cyclical enforcement program. Each regulated product category is checked on the marketplace over a seven-year cycle. Product Safety Officers across the country go into the marketplace and test suspect products. Under the Food and Consumer Safety Action Plan, Health Canada is aiming to shorten the cycle from seven years to a shorter period of time.

Consumer and Stakeholder Reports of Incidents

Consumers and stakeholders are encouraged to contact us when they have a consumer product-related incident or concern. Health Canada will take action on each complaint that falls under our legislation when we have all the required product information. This complaint can be made using our new online incident report form (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/advisories-avis/incident/index-eng.php), by email (alberta.prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca) or by phone (1-866-662-0666).

Information on Recalls

Anyone can sign up to receive instant emails or for the widget for recall information. To get more information and to sign up for the widget, please visit: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/home-accueil/sm-ms/wid-gad-eng.php.

To sign up for instant emails, please visit: http://hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/advisories-avis/_subscribe-abonnement/index-eng.php.

One can also search our recalls: <http://cpsr-rspc.hc-sc.gc.ca/PR-RP/home-accueil-eng.jsp>.

Recall Effectiveness and Monitoring

Under the current legislation, the *Hazardous Products Act*, Health Canada is not able to mandate a recall. Health Canada is also not able to demand information on the effectiveness of a recall. However, we currently send a form to companies who have recalled a product and ask them to fill it out voluntarily with information on their recall.

Product Safety Officers monitor recalls by doing spot checks in retail locations. This also allows us the opportunity to educate retailers on our legislation and their responsibilities.

Product Safety Team in Alberta

There are nine Product Safety Officers located in Alberta: five are in Edmonton and four are in Calgary. Our region covers Alberta and the three northern territories. In a given day, a Product Safety Officer can be found in retail locations, at booths at consumer shows, inspecting trade shows, at the border working with the Canada Border Services Agency, auditing consumer chemical companies, doing presentations and liaising with our counterparts across the country, including Ottawa, to update regulations. 🔥

If you would like to stay updated on the progress of Bill C-36 and become part of the new *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act* listserve, please send an e-mail to ccpsan-subscribe-request@list.hc-sc.gc.ca. If you would like further information on the work of the Product Safety Program, please contact Carlie Watson at 780-495-8856 or by email at carlie.watson@hc-sc.gc.ca.

Maximizing Interoperability

BY DENNIS BROWN, Director of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (director@ciffc.ca) and Dave Bokovay, ICS Project Leader, CIFFC (aircraft@ciffc.ca)
Photo courtesy of Tom Cox, AEMA

THE ALBERTA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (AEMA) and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) have partnered with others to update the original Canadian version of the Incident Command System (ICS). The result will be revised ICS Canada training material reflecting an all-hazard/all-incident approach that will be compatible with the US ICS/NIMS used by Homeland Security for all incidents in the United States.

In 2002, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) and the wildland fire agencies (Provincial/Territorial/Federal) implemented the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS principles and a complete training curriculum were developed and adopted by wildland fire agencies across Canada. The CIFFC ICS focused on the organizational structure and processes for managing wildland fires. However, the use of ICS has expanded well beyond wildland fire response, to provide a system that will enable any organization to manage any incident or event, regardless of cause, size, location or complexity.

AEMA, through CIFFC, has also become partners with all F/P/T wildland fire agencies as well as Parks Canada, Ground Search and Rescue Council of Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada to update/develop a pan-Canadian ICS. This ICS Canada update will Canadianize the terminology to reflect political, emergency management regimes and geographic aspects specific to Canada.



Incident Command Post at the Airdrie Train Derailment, August 3, 2010.

What is the Incident Command System (ICS)?

ICS is a standardized on-site management system designed to enable effective, efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within one common organizational structure.

ICS has three primary purposes:

- safety of responders and others
- achievement of incident objectives
- efficient use of resources

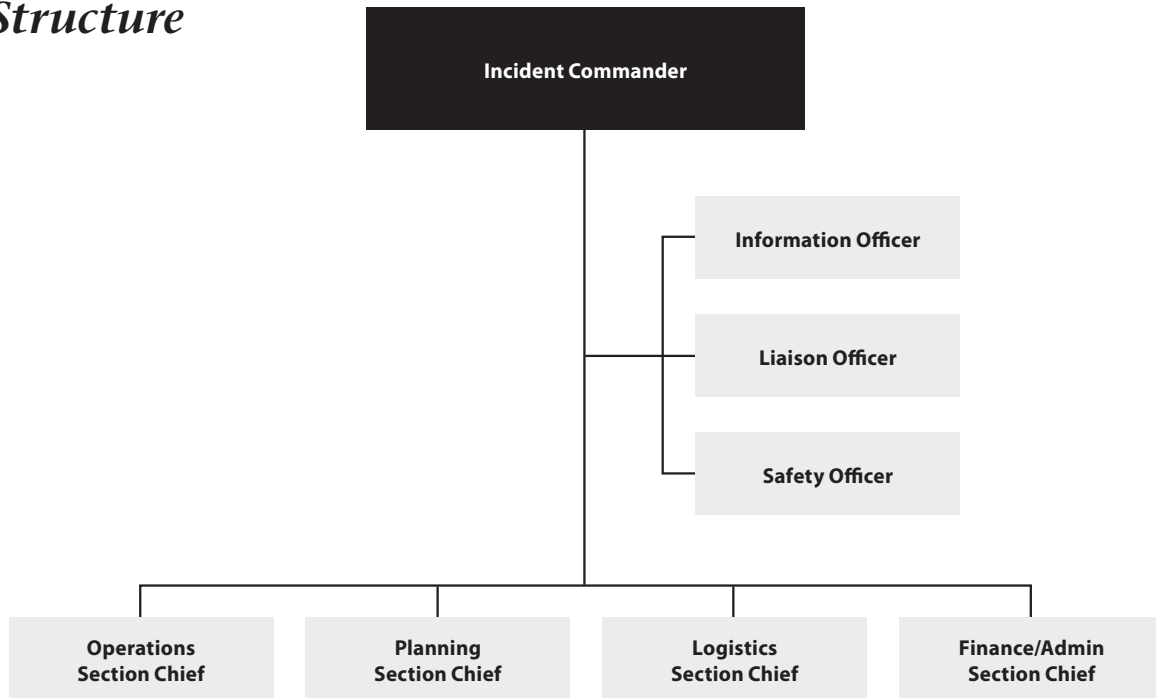
The ICS system has considerable internal flexibility; it can grow or shrink to meet the changing needs of the incident or event. ICS has been tested through more than 30 years of multi-disciplinary applications, in emergency and non-emergency situations

ranging from small to large incidents, by all levels of government as well as the private sector.

ICS brings standardized organizational structure, functions, processes and terminology. The standardized processes allow all responders to the same incident to formulate a unified plan to manage the incident efficiently. The use of standardized ICS plain-language terminology reduces the risk of miscommunication among the many possible emergency responders.

As well, ICS allows response organizations to utilize only those aspects that are practically suited to a given incident. While the full expansion of the ICS structure may appear complex, this would occur only during complex incidents, and would serve to maintain the optimum span of control by injecting appropriate supervisory levels.

ICS Structure



Incidents typically begin and end locally, and are managed on a daily basis at the lowest possible geographical, organizational and jurisdictional level. However, there are instances in which successful incident management operations depend on the involvement of multiple jurisdictions, levels of government, functional agencies and/or first responder disciplines. These instances require effective and efficient coordination across this broad spectrum of organizations and activities.

Who is involved?

ICS forms the basis for interoperability and compatibility that will, in turn, enable a diverse set of public and private organizations to conduct well-integrated and effective incident response operations.

When and where can ICS be used?

Most incidents are managed locally and are typically handled at a local level by emergency response personnel within

“This ICS Canada update will Canadianize the terminology to reflect political, emergency management regimes and geographic aspects specific to Canada.”

a single jurisdiction. The majority of responses need go no further. In other instances, incidents that begin with a single response within a single jurisdiction can rapidly expand to multidisciplinary, multi-jurisdictional levels requiring significant additional resources and operational support. These instances require effective and efficient coordination across a broad spectrum of emergency responders, organizations and activities.

ICS can also provide the flexibility for coordinated and collaborative incident management for incidents where additional resources are required, or resources are provided from different organizations within a single jurisdiction or outside the jurisdiction. ICS can also be used for complex incidents with national, provincial or territorial implications (such as an emerging infectious disease, cross-border disasters or a bioterrorism attack). These instances require effective and efficient coordination across this broad spectrum of organizations and activities, and ICS provides that structure.

Why is ICS so beneficial?

As a system, ICS is extremely useful; not only does it provide an organizational structure for incident management, but it also guides the process for planning, building and adapting that structure. Using ICS for every incident or planned event helps hone and maintain skills needed for the large-scale incidents. 🔥

Samitaran's Purse Canada helps out in southern Alberta

BY MARTIN SILBERNAGEL, Communications Advisor, Samaritan's Purse – Photos courtesy of Samaritan's Purse, Mennonite Disaster Services and Red Cross.

IN THE MIDDLE OF JUNE 2010, residents of Medicine Hat and surrounding communities watched helplessly as rivers and creeks began to rise around them. On June 18, there were reports of basements beginning to flood. The Trans-Canada Highway was closed due to flooding. As the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries continued to rise, evacuations were ordered and many residents in southern Alberta saw their homes flooded, some losing everything.

“It's amazing how just a little encouragement from our NGO teams bring hope for the people in flood-hit areas.”



MDS volunteers outside a completed house in Irvine, Alberta.

In Calgary, Brent Davis, who coordinates Canadian disaster response for Samaritan's Purse Canada, and also serves as co-chair of the NGO Council of Alberta, began to make contact with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Medicine Hat, preparing to move the organization's Disaster Response Unit to Medicine Hat to help residents deal with the clean up.

“Having worked on a number of disaster responses across Canada, it was easy to see that the people of Medicine Hat were going to need help,” said Davis.

The Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief Unit is a tractor-trailer unit outfitted with essential disaster recovery equipment including generators, pumps, hand tools and safety gear for volunteers. It functions as a base for volunteer operations in disaster recovery, and is equipped with a self-contained office, communications system and other supplies.

“The City of Medicine Hat was working on a response to help the people affected by these floods and when we became aware of the Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief Unit it seemed like a natural fit,” said Varley Weisman, the manager of Social Development for Medicine Hat. “The effort of our services and of volunteers, coordinated through Samaritan's Purse, was really helpful in bringing people the assistance they needed.”

The City of Medicine Hat established a hotline that people who needed assistance or people who wanted to volunteer could call. These names were passed on to



Interior of a house after Samaritan's Purse volunteer clean up teams have completed a mud-out.

Samaritan's Purse, who helped coordinate volunteers to clean up affected homes. Several NGO Council members were among those offering assistance, including Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS), the Canadian National Baptist Convention (CNBC), the Red Cross of Canada and The Salvation Army.

Samaritan's Purse made Hillcrest Church the volunteer coordination centre for volunteers assisting with recovery and began to coordinate volunteers from MDS, CNBC and the community to go into homes and help residents remove mud, soggy drywall and insulation, administer mould remediation and help people get their homes to the point where they were ready to restore or rebuild. The Salvation Army also provided food on a daily basis for volunteer teams through the recovery project.

In the two weeks that the NGO helped residents of Medicine Hat recover from the flooding, volunteers logged over 1,200 hours of work, helping over 70 families recover from the devastation. Alongside these activities, the Red Cross also provided those who were displaced with emergency food, clothing and shelter and ran two disaster recovery centres, one in Medicine Hat and one in Irvine, to support local and provincial governments in bringing help to those affected by the flooding. Additionally, the Red Cross provided over 2,500 hours of volunteer labour.

“It functions as a base for volunteer operations in disaster recovery, and is equipped with a self-contained office, communications system and other supplies.”



A volunteer removing mud from the interior of a house (notice the water-line on the wall).

“The key to our success in Medicine Hat and area was the selfless collaboration of non-profit organizations,” said Davis. “Each agency put the needs of residents before their own agendas and worked together tirelessly to achieve the common goal of recovery.”

For all of the organizations involved in responding to the flooding, the experience was positive.

“It was a truly empowering experience to band together with others who have one heart and mind and see the good that can be accomplished,” said Clinton Cairns, External Ministries Pastor for Hillcrest Church. “Through this experience we were not only able to bring hope to those affected but were able to build a bond among our parishioners that were involved, something that could not have happened without NGO collaboration.”

Darla Ponath, the western Canada disaster relief coordinator for CNBC agreed. “It was our pleasure to assist in home cleanup in Irvine, Alberta,” Ponath said. “It’s amazing how just a little encouragement from our NGO teams bring hope for the people in flood-hit areas.”

Through the collaboration of NGO and government, the residents of southern Alberta were able to begin to get their lives back together following the devastating flooding.

“The (NGO) teams understood what people in need needed,” said Weisman. “The teams were respectful of the homeowners and everyone had a real down-to-earth, let’s-get-down-to-business approach, which was incredible. Everyone the teams helped were very appreciative.” 🔥



Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief Unit.

Vegreville's fire chief – an exemplary leader and volunteer

IT'S SURPRISING THAT UNDER the word "extraordinary" in the dictionary, it doesn't mention Jerrold Lemko. For those who don't know or haven't heard about Jerrold, he is the Fire Chief for the Vegreville Fire Department (VFD). But that is just one of the many "hats" he wears. He is also the Emergency Services Manager for Vegreville and works full time as a Health and Safety Coordinator with ATCO Electric Ltd. in Vegreville.

In addition to these "hats," Jerrold is also a very busy community volunteer. His spirit of volunteerism started when he was a child growing up in Holden, Alberta. He often cut grass and shovelled snow for seniors and helped out in any way he could. During his school years, Jerrold led fundraisers and served as yearbook editor.

When he moved to Vegreville 35 years ago as a Power Systems Electrician with ATCO Electric, he started coaching and officiating sports such as hockey, soccer and baseball, even before he had children of his own. If it meant helping children in the community get the leadership and true values of sportsmanship,

Jerrold was there to help. He was also active in events such as Christmas and summer parades and volunteering with the Bruce Agricultural Society, cleaning and maintaining the grounds and working at concession booths. Jerrold and his wife Anita, now married 33 years, also spent many nights fixing toys in their basement for the toy lending library.

Over the years, Jerrold's volunteer activities have included serving as a coach, administrator, chairman, vice president, president, board member and director with many community organizations and at provincial and national levels. In addition

to all of this he is also a mentor, friend and colleague to many. It is not surprising that Jerrold is one of the most respected individuals in his community.

When his two sons, Johnathon and Shawn (Sparky) became active in sports and cultural activities, Jerrold was instrumental in leading these organizations. Even though his children are now grown, Jerrold still continues to serve in any capacity possible. "If it involved kids, Jerrold was there. He is a true asset to the development of children's education," said Phil Rowe, Captain and Fire Services Coordinator/Public Education with VFD.



Jerrold Lemko, Fire Chief for the Vegreville Fire Department

As well, Jerrold makes time to volunteer for a variety of causes from sports to dancing to food banks. Those who have worked and volunteered with them agree that Jerrold's involvement in the area of sport has had a sound impact on the development of sport within the community, provincially and nationally.

In addition to sports, one of Jerrold's greatest loves was volunteering for the VFD. He joined the department in 1991, and his strong leadership skills quickly turned him into an officer. In 1998 he was chosen overwhelmingly by the membership to assume the role of fire chief.

Rowe advised that Jerrold's nickname is Big Daddy. "He is always there to help everyone and to listen to them. He doesn't train firefighters, he develops leaders, he develops community-minded citizens and overall develops better people for this world."

Awards received

Not surprisingly, Jerrold has received many accolades over the years for his volunteerism, dedication to service, etc., some of which are listed below.

- **1991-92** – Minor Hockey Award
- **May 2000** – Volunteer of the Year, Town of Vegreville
- **March 2003** – Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal
- **2003** – ATCO Electric Volunteer of the Year
- **May 2004** – Alberta Emergency Services Medal
- **December 2005** – Stars of the Millennium
- **December 2005** – Inducted into Alberta's Volunteer Hall of Fame
- **2005** – Awarded the Alberta Centennial Medal for contribution to sport
- **2007** – Vegreville Fire Department's Employee of the Year

As fire chief, Jerrold established an aggressive training program that has made the VFD a leader in volunteer departments in regards to formal training. He also established one of the first formal junior firefighter training programs in Alberta. Since its inception in 2000, it has been highly endorsed by the high schools in the Vegreville area and now has a long list of students waiting to join the program. Two of the graduates now have full-time positions with city fire departments.

As well, Jerrold encouraged the VFD to be very active in the community. From helping children to encouraging home safety to spending time with seniors promoting their safety and just listening to how time has changed us all, Jerrold encouraged department volunteers to be part of it all.

"Jerrold has always lived by the motto 'Better to Best'. To look at the equipment and facilities we have here in Vegreville you would understand how he lives the motto," proudly stated Chris Jardine, Assistant Manager of Emergency Services/Deputy



Jerrold helps instruct students in the junior firefighter program.

Fire Chief for Vegreville. “Jerrold commands a station occupied by eight apparatus and support vehicles which are manned by 46 dedicated volunteer firefighters and officers. Jerrold is also in charge of the Vegreville Emergency Medical Services, which operates out of the same building with four units, staffed by 10 full-time highly-trained Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics.”

The VFD has a strong training program where members are constantly learning with the fire services as the world changes. “If you want to learn, Jerrold will see that you

are taught. His belief in lifelong learning is very obvious around the station as members are free to enroll in courses that benefit the community and the department,” noted Rowe.

“Jerrold believes that providing the highest level of service to the citizens of the Town of Vegreville and surrounding area is of utmost importance and he strives to raise the bar in all aspects of this service,” added Jardine. “When I am fortunate enough to become Chief of this great organization I hope I can lead by Jerrold’s example – Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things.”

Rowe added, “By all accounts, Jerrold epitomizes a true volunteer, and his quote on the VFD web page sums up his rewards for all that he has done.”

I task each individual who has taken the time to read my message to say a prayer and if the only prayer you say in your whole life is “thank you” that would suffice.”

“I would not be where I am today without Jerrold’s guidance to me. Jerrold has been not only my fire chief but a mentor, a colleague, a friend and almost a father,” added Rowe.




Members of the Vegreville Fire Department’s muscular dystrophy boot drive.



Jerrold and colleagues at the VFD 100th Anniversary.

I can’t say enough about the man and personally if I became half of what he is today, I would be proud. But knowing Jerrold, he wouldn’t let me be half of what he is ... he would push me to be everything that I can.”

During the 100th anniversary of the Vegreville Fire Department last summer, those in attendance came to know Jerrold a bit more as he relayed a very personal story about the struggles that firefighters sometimes face and the fact that post traumatic stress syndrome can indeed be a reality.

In his closing remarks at the event, Jerrold stated: “I wanted to take this opportunity to share a little piece of my experience and to let you know that it takes more than money, resources and policy to foster a fire department. It takes the love and support of family and friends for these are our foundation and the base of our strength.” 

Hazards in the Prairies and in the North

ENVIRONMENT CANADA'S PRAIRIE AND NORTHERN REGION (PNR) encompasses more than 50 per cent of Canada's landmass and includes five political jurisdictions (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut). The landscape is diverse and spans many eco-climatic regimes including the Grasslands zone in the south, the Boreal, and the Sub-Arctic, and Arctic regime in the North.

A variety of weather extremes impact this region throughout the year. Severe thunderstorms frequently occur during the summer over the Prairies. Weather phenomena associated with these storms include large hail, heavy rainfalls, lightning, flooding, tornadoes and other damaging winds. All of these phenomena can threaten human life and exact heavy annual tolls in



Aftermath of a tornado.



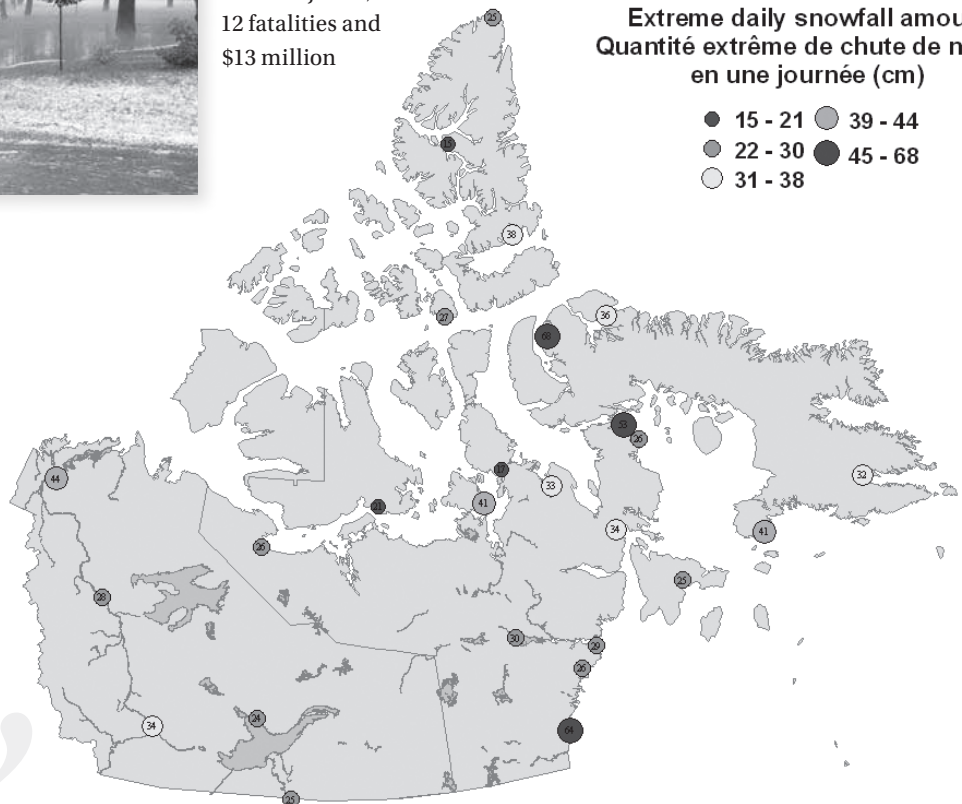
Extreme rain.

crop, infrastructure and other property damage. The Pine Lake Tornado of July 14, 2000 in central Alberta resulted in 140 injuries, 12 fatalities and \$13 million

in damages. The impacts and economic losses due to drought on the Prairies, in the agricultural, environmental and hydroelectric sectors are significant.

Extreme daily snowfall amount
Quantité extrême de chute de neige en une journée (cm)

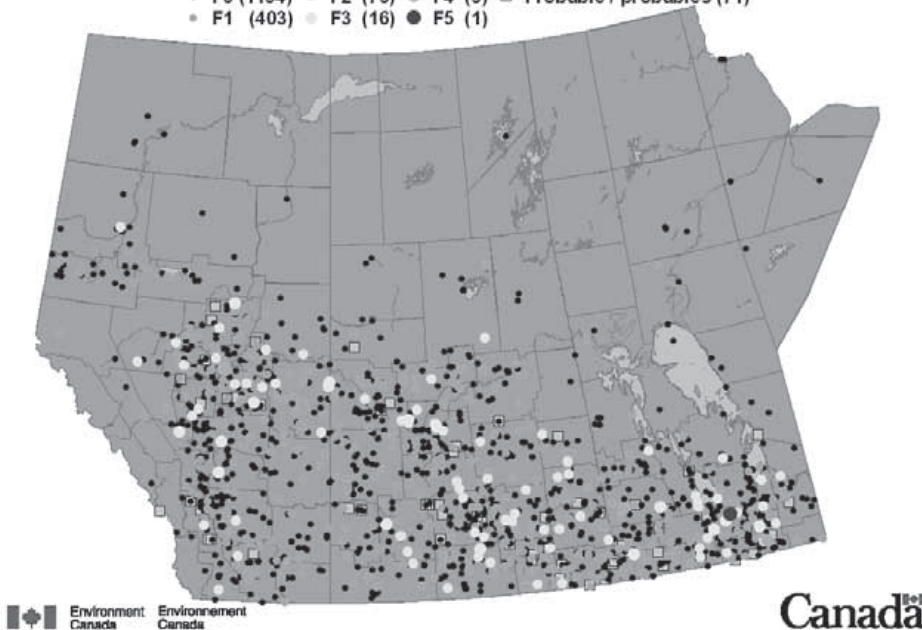
- 15 - 21 ● 39 - 44
- 22 - 30 ● 45 - 68
- 31 - 38



Shorter winter road seasons due to climate change will impact the transportation of construction equipment and goods such as food and fuel.

All confirmed and probable tornadoes by Fujita Scale
Tornades confirmées et probables par l'échelle de Fujita (1970 - 2009)

• F0 (1134) • F2 (73) • F4 (3) □ Probable / probables (71)
• F1 (403) • F3 (16) • F5 (1)



The North is a harsh climate often affected by storms in the fall and winter that produce strong winds, channelled by local topographic features. These storms can also produce heavy precipitation of various types, hazardous blowing snow and low visibilities. Winter ice roads are critical links to the south for communities and mine and exploration sites. Shorter winter road seasons due to climate change will impact the transportation of construction equipment and goods such as food and fuel.

Atmospheric Hazards website in the Prairie and Northern Region

Provincial and territorial emergency legislation in the Prairie and Northern Region identifies the need to produce emergency management plans. Decision makers must be aware of the types of atmospheric hazards their jurisdictions are at risk for and understand the climatology of these events to create effective plans.

The Atmospheric Hazards portal for the Prairie and Northern Region (PNR) was launched in 2009. The site assists municipal,



Prairie lightning storm.

“Severe thunderstorms frequently occur during the summer over the Prairies. Weather phenomena associated with these storms include large hail, heavy rainfalls, lightning, flooding, tornadoes and other damaging winds.”

provincial and territorial governments to identify and assess their atmospheric hazards for emergency planning. The Prairie and Northern Hazards portal provides background information on significant atmospheric hazards relevant to the region. The information is presented in graphical and map formats. Supplementary datasets

for select locations are also available. Examples of severe weather represented on the site include lightning, thunderstorms, tornadoes, hail, heavy snowstorms, fog, extreme temperatures and blizzards. 🔥

For more information please visit: <http://pnr.hazards.ca> which is part of Environment Canada's Atmospheric Hazards Network: www.hazards.ca

Alberta's Kananaskis Country creates many rescue opportunities

BY MIKE KOPPANG, Public Safety Specialist, Kananaskis Country Alberta

"We have a report of two overdue climbers on Mt. Indefatigable in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park," a Kananaskis Emergency services dispatcher reports.

A number of times throughout the summer, public safety staff and Conservation Officers working within Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation are wakened from a peaceful sleep in the wee hours of the morning to a report just like this one of a person in the backcountry who may be in trouble. Since 1979, there have been over 10,000 backcountry rescues within the Kananaskis Country region. Lost hikers, injured scramblers, stranded climbers, avalanches, plane crashes and even cave rescues are just some of the types of calls that one may expect to receive at any time while working in the area. As a result of the myriad of different activities parks users are attempting, Conservation Officer staff working in the area are highly trained. They also possess a diverse skill set that allows them to help these persons in need of assistance while working as part of a highly skilled team that includes emergency services dispatchers, RCMP, ambulance personnel and public safety specialists.



Broken ankle on Mt. Rundle in Spray Valley Provincial Park.



A sling rescue on Mt. Rundle.

The Association of Canadian Mountain Guides plays an important historical role in the Kananaskis Country Public Safety section. The program is staffed by three full-time specialists who are all members working within the Mountain Guide Program. This program is not an

easy process to complete and often it can take a candidate somewhere between 3-7 years to become an internationally certified mountain guide. In addition to this, specialists and Conservation Officers are also trained for swiftwater rescue, cave rescue, ice rescue, incident command,

“Detailed local forecasts and local weather observations combined with an intimate knowledge of the local snowpack help forecasters work to understand the challenging Rockies snowpack.”

helicopter sling rescue, wilderness first aid, search management and avalanche control. It can take many years and several attempts to complete all the necessary training to become a full time Public Safety Specialist or a Conservation Officer working in the Kananaskis area.

During the summer months, many public safety emergencies may involve injured or lost hikers, whereas in the winter months a different user group moves into Alberta's backcountry. Backcountry ski touring and ice climbing have seen a large increase in popularity over the past few years. As a result of this increased usage, Public Safety Specialists working with Conservation Officers assigned to the snow study program will ski into the backcountry to obtain weather and snow science information to compile the daily Public Avalanche Forecast for the Kananaskis area. The avalanche forecast is divided into three elevation zones:

- below treeline
- treeline
- alpine.

A forecasted danger rating is applied to each region for a 24-hour period. Detailed local forecasts and local weather observations combined with an intimate knowledge of the local snowpack help forecasters work to understand the challenging Rockies snowpack.

Overall, the job of a Kananaskis Public Safety Specialist or a Conservation Officer provides a diverse and unique challenge to persons working in Kananaskis. They may respond to a lost hiker in the morning or a broken femur on an alpine peak in the afternoon. Staff are prepared and trained to go into the backcountry and assist persons in distress at any time throughout the year.

We wish everyone a safe and happy fall and winter season in Kananaskis! 🔥



A precarious rescue location.

2010 Fire Summit outcome

Putting the focus on arson

Photos courtesy of RCMP Forensic lab, Edmonton

THE PERSONAL STORY OF Doreen Bergson, an arson victim in her eighties, set the tone for the third annual Fire Summit, which was hosted by Edmonton Fire Rescue Services (EFRS) and the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) on June 16, 2010. This year's summit focused on the impacts of arson and prevention strategies for the community. Participants included members of the police and emergency response community, experts in the field, representatives of community crime reduction groups, community leagues, school boards and the insurance industry.

"Every year there are a significant number of arsons in Edmonton. Not only do they cause extensive property damage, but they also pose serious risks to our communities and diminish our citizens' sense of safety," stated EFRS Chief Ken Block. "Hearing directly from an arson victim helped raise greater awareness about the devastation that arson can cause and that this crime needs to be curbed."

With goals to raise awareness of how arson affects the Edmonton community and develop creative strategies to address these issues, Fire Summit III focused on three key topics:

- raising awareness about arson,
- definition and recording of arson-related crimes and
- the prevalence of arson in the community.

A few facts about arson

- 1 out of 3 fires are deliberately set. They are arson crimes.
- Arson has a low solvability and conviction rate.
- Motivations behind arson are complex, ranging from revenge to recognition to thrills, which complicates prevention, investigation and convictions. Arson is also used to cover up other crimes, particularly homicide.
- Small fire setters become big fire starters, moving along the continuum from mischief to serious crime.
- Without attention, this crime will not be reduced.
- Arson is not a victimless crime.

The discussion that took place and the suggestions made were grouped into five key areas:

1. raise awareness
2. elevate the seriousness of the crime
3. partnerships

"The group also discussed the need to conduct better research and a more coordinated approach."

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4. develop better data
5. legislative shifts/attitude shifts

Within each of these areas, very significant ideas were put on the table, from community engagement being central to arson reduction to discussion about whether the language should be more explicit about the seriousness of the crime. Equally important was the need for collaboration at all levels, from police and fire to community groups and the provincial government. The group also discussed the need to conduct better research and a more coordinated approach.

The discussions also helped the group determine three key summit recommendations:

- develop a regional inter-agency task force on arson.
- add arson to the Edmonton Police Service Neighbourhood Crime Map list of crimes.
- develop a regional fire and police service arson-focused community engagement program that works with schools, community leagues and community stakeholders.



Samples collected at an arson investigation are prepared prior to analysis.

“Feedback from the 2010 Summit was very positive. EFRS and EPS have committed to ongoing efforts to maintain the momentum of the

Statistics paint a picture

According to the most recent statistical report of the Alberta Fire Commission, 2007, arson/vandalism was the third highest cause of fire injuries in Alberta.

Arson and vandalism accounted for 27% of all fires in Alberta in 2007. This means that approximately one out of four fires was deliberately set. It also resulted in significant \$losses at \$61,140,246, making it the third costliest act/omission (after not determined and mechanical/electrical failure/malfunction).

For major known causes of home fires, arson/set fire ranked as #1, with 372 fires (21%), six deaths, 10 injuries and fire losses of \$30,456,963.

Where fires started on the exterior wall, arson/set fires accounted for 22%. Arson also accounted for 16% of living room fires.

summit. Our work will seek to reduce, prevent and provide education and awareness of arson in our community,” added Fire Chief Block. 🔥

For more information, visit the fire summit website at: www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/fire-summit.aspx



Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry equipment used to identify accelerants used in arson.

The science behind arson detection

One of the participants at the 2010 Fire Summit was Mark Sandercock, Ph.D., Manager, Trace Evidence Operations Support, National Centre for Forensic Services – Alberta, Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Sandercock is currently responsible for supporting Trace Evidence operations nationally through client consultations and training, research and development, maintaining national databases and procuring the latest instrumentation and technology to assist the operation work of Trace Evidence. He serves and supports operations in both Edmonton and Ottawa. Mark spent the first 18.5 years of his career directly in operational casework, which included involvement in arson casework. He continues to provide advice to investigators and forensic scientists in arson investigations.

According to Sandercock, fire investigators have a variety of tools they can use to help determine the origin and cause of a fire and the analysis conducted at the lab can identify any ignitable liquid present at a fire or other crime scene. This includes analysis of fire debris and ignitable liquids.

“Ignitable liquids such as gasoline, paint thinner, lighter fluid or diesel fuel may be used in an arson to accelerate a fire,” advised Sandercock. “Even after a fully involved fire, traces of accelerant used in an arson are often still present at the scene. Our operation, Trace Evidence, can examine debris from a fire scene or clothing from a suspect and identify any ignitable liquid present.”

Sandercock pointed out that the absence of an ignitable liquid in debris doesn't necessarily mean that none was originally present. “The location of the fire debris in which an ignitable liquid was found will impact the significance of the evidence (i.e. gasoline in a dresser drawer is more significant than finding gasoline in a shed where a gas-powered lawn mower was stored).” He also advised that the fuel found in a container at a suspect's residence or in a gasoline bomb such as a Molotov cocktail can be identified.

To assist fire investigators to ensure that potential evidence is properly collected and stored, Sandercock provided the following tips and advice.

Taking evidence

- identify the origin of the fire
- seize materials with suspicious odours
- seize absorbent materials – carpet, wood, clothing, fabric, upholstery, soil, concrete, plaster
- seize empty containers
- seize a liquid sample
- wet is good, do not dry

Collecting types of exhibits

- exhibits related to origin of fire – recommend 3 to 5 exhibits from across origin
- porous, partially burnt debris
- charred or partially melted containers
- incendiary devices

Avoiding collection

- grey or white ashes
- metal (e.g. ducting)
- glass
- other rigid, non-porous materials visibly heated by fire

Additional collection tips

- collect fire debris as soon as possible
- collect a control sample if possible
- ensure the fire debris is packaged properly
- ensure there is no contamination between exhibits

Taking precautions

- Prevent contamination by:
 - storing containers in a sealed condition prior to use
 - changing gloves and cleaning tools between exhibits
 - carefully packaging liquid samples in 100 mL screw top bottles with 30-60 mL of sample
 - not submitting entire contents of container
 - not storing containers or exhibits near gasoline-powered equipment

Suitable containers for fire debris are:

- metal cans (e.g. Great West Container)
- glass canning jars (e.g. Mason, Bernardin)
- non-perforated nylon exhibit bags (Grand River Products Inc.)
 - double bag and tape or heat seal, then perform pillow test
 - submit, as an additional exhibit, a control bag from the same lot

NOTE: do not use household garbage bags, baggies, Ziploc bags, whirlpacs, secur-pac, grocery bags, paper bags, household food jars (jam, pickle, etc.), medical swabs on a stick, plastic containers or vials (“specimen” vials).

Other physical evidence includes:

- charred documents
- paper matches
- candle wax or timing device (Note: any suspected Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) will be examined in Ottawa)
- cloth wicks (e.g. Molotov cocktail)
- blood (for DNA)
- blood (for carbon monoxide)
- organs and blood (for drugs)

Marking physical evidence includes:

- incident/file number
- date item collected
- identity of collector or investigator
- location found
- brief description of evidence

Sandercock notes that when requesting an analysis it is important to include the following:

- agency file number
- submitting agency name
- caption regarding name, charge, date and location (who, what, when and where)
- new or reopened case
- brief narrative of circumstances relating pertinent details
- list and provide a short description of exhibits
- analysis requested
- name, signature and rank

Sandercock advised that conveyance of evidence to the laboratory can be done in person, by courier or by registered mail. It should be contained in a properly sealed package with correspondence on the outside of the package. A Request for Analysis form must accompany any exhibits. He also points out that any thing sent must follow Transportation of Dangerous Goods guidelines and any liquid samples should be stored and shipped separately from fire debris/ other exhibits.

For case submission pre-authorization, contact the central Forensic Advisory Centre at 1-866-NPS-LABS (1-866-677-5227).

Water everywhere – dam it and then release it

BY TERRENCE LAZARUS, R.E.T. Operations Manager Oldman Basin, Alberta Environment, Environmental Management Water Management Operations

IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA, one often hears the phrase “If you don’t like the weather, wait a minute.” This truism reflects the great variability of the weather in southern Alberta, which is due to its geographical location close to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Southern Alberta’s proximity to the mountains means that rivers within southern Alberta have an abundance of water because of snow pack accumulating over the winter and melting in the spring. As part of this hydrological cycle, this area can experience very high spring rainfall as a result of cold, wet, atmospheric low pressure systems that come across from the west coast and move into Alberta from Montana while mixing with warm moist air from the south.

This is what happened during the summer of 2010, when southern Alberta received about 150 per cent of normal precipitation (May to September 2010 maps can be viewed at <http://environment.alberta.ca/forecasting/data/precipmaps/sep2010/summnorm.pdf>). In particular, between June 17 and 19, 2010, unusually heavy rain fell over the entire area resulting in devastating flooding in parts of the region. The highest concentration of the rainfall occurred along the Milk River Ridge near Cardston to the Cypress Hills south of Medicine Hat.

All reservoirs within that area filled during this time and operators had to put into action their flood operational procedures. These procedures guide operators to safely managing their reservoirs while attenuating floods to ensure timely notification to downstream communities and emergency response agencies.

Almost all reservoirs in Alberta are constructed of earth material and are known as earth embankment reservoirs, unlike other large-scale dams, such as the Hoover Dam, that are made of concrete. Earthen dams are very safe; in fact, there has not been a major dam failure of an earth dam in Alberta ever recorded.

Nevertheless, earthen dams come with the caution that dam operators can never allow the water in the reservoir to overtop the dam. Overtopping of an earthen dam always leads to catastrophic failure, as the water flowing over the top of the dam washes out the dam material, causing the dam to breach.

So what do you as a downstream stakeholder or emergency responder know about the dams that are upstream from you and what do you know about the people who operate those dams? The answers to these questions are important to ensure an effective response to an emergency as a result in high flows downstream of these dams.

These high flows can be a result of releases due to high inflows caused by rain or an extremely rare dam breach. In both cases, knowledge of dam operating procedures and emergency response plans is vital to helping you handle high stream flows.

The first question is “Do you know the location of all the dams that are upstream from your location?” If the answer is “no,” then you have a number of resources available to you. The first and most obvious is to review the maps available for your area. Once you know where these dams are and who owns and operates them, you can contact these people or agencies and discuss operations with them. Knowing who operates dams in your area can be vitally beneficial when responding to an emergency.

Alberta Environment’s website shows the major reservoirs and lakes in Alberta at <http://environment.alberta.ca/apps/basins/default.aspx>. This page is organized by river basin, and in many cases municipalities cover more than one river basin. Click on the basin of interest and then Lakes and Reservoir levels to see the major lakes and reservoirs in a particular area and the current elevation of those lakes and reservoir.



The photos above show the outflow from the St. Mary Dam.

Alberta Environment’s website also provides an option to obtain information on water licences for the South Saskatchewan River basin through the “Licence Viewer” (the URL is http://ssrb.environment.alberta.ca/licence_viewer.html). The application has several search options that either delineate by Water Management Area or by using mouse clickable areas.

Alberta Environment’s principle role during a flood is to work with municipalities to ensure they have as much warning as possible during a flood. In addition, Alberta Environment owns and operates approximately 100 water structures, including dams. While in most cases the main purpose of a dam is water storage for irrigation purposes, many dams also help to mitigate flooding. For more information on Alberta Environment’s Water Management Operations visit: www.environment.alberta.ca/forecasting/FAQ. 🔥

Gregg Lake FireSmart Project – a community taking action

On September 4, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) hosted a *FireSmart* community work bee at Gregg Lake. This event is the most recent of many community meetings that have led to a *FireSmart* plan being developed for the small subdivision. *FireSmart* promotes action from all partners, and community involvement is a key part of that. ASRD, the municipality, the provincial park bordering the area and, most importantly, Gregg Lake residents were all partners in developing the plan.

Initial meetings introduced residents to the potential wildfire threat to the community. Input from the community identified unique characteristics and local insight to areas of concern. ASRD listened to those concerns and integrated them into the plan.


Early on in the process, the residents of Gregg Lake requested a personal approach to community involvement and requested that ASRD come to the community and assess individual homes. Homeowners wanted to learn more about the risk to their properties and ASRD worked with them to provide the knowledge to place things into action.

At the request of Gregg Lake residents, a community *FireSmart* day followed. ASRD set up a *FireSmart* demonstration where a wildland firefighting crew cut, thinned, pruned and cleared the understory of trees to show residents what *FireSmart* might look like on their own property. Dennis Quintilio & Associates (DQ&A), who ASRD has contracted to draft the *FireSmart* plan, hosted a barbeque where the first outline of the *FireSmart* Plan was presented to residents. Community members then gave further input and the contractor integrated those ideas into the next draft of the plan.

Following the information session, property owners were given the opportunity to have wildfire prevention specialists from ASRD complete a *FireSmart* homeowner assessment. Homeowners were encouraged to take on realistic, incremental changes to make their homes and properties more *FireSmart*.

“Early on in the process, the residents of Gregg Lake requested a personal approach to community involvement and requested that ASRD come to the community and assess individual homes.”

As the project continued, Alberta Tourism Parks and Recreation identified an area where debris could be stored and burned during the following winter. Yellowhead County is also contributing to the partnership by providing communications and project support. All parties are working together for positive solutions to the wildfire threat reality posed to the community of Gregg Lake.

“We’re early on in the process but it has been really positive so far,” said Heather Hawkins, a wildfire information officer with ASRD. “Community support for the project is really dictating the strong momentum of this project.” 

To learn more about how your community can be involved in **FireSmart** go to: FireSmart.alberta.ca or contact Tracy Price, **FireSmart** community protection specialist at Alberta Sustainable Resource Development at (780)644-3298 or tracy.price@gov.ab.ca

FireSmart Action Items

The following are a few items that you can encourage your community to do at a minimal cost and a little bit of time

- Contact your utility company if trees or branches are not clear of power lines.
- Always keep a watchful eye on fire pits and, if utilized, burn barrels when they are in use. Make the attempt to avoid the use of burn barrels and instead take debris to a transfer site/landfill.
- Ensure your roof is free of needles and leaves and there are no overhanging trees or branches that can catch on fire.
- Make sure your chimney is up to code and has a spark arresting screen installed.
- Remove all long grass, shrubs, logs branches, twigs and needles within 10 metres of your home.
- Have a nearby water supply for emergencies.
- Store firewood a minimum of 10 metres from any structures.

FireSmart home owner assessment can be found at: www.srd.alberta.ca/ManagingPrograms/PreventingFightingWildfire/FireSmart/documents/Firesmart-HomeownersManual-ProtectYourHomeFromWildfire.pdf

Working on behalf of our members

BY BILL PURDY, Executive Director, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, bpurdy@xplornet.com

SINCE THE LAST ARTICLE, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) has been responding to a number of issues and new direction.

The recent announcement of the departure of Dave Hodgins has resulted in a number of responses, generally shock about his leaving. There have been a lot of questions regarding message seeking and asking questions. My office does not have the details about the decision that was made within government.

Some of the comments received include, "Dave was a pillar of strength for the fire services," Dave was attuned to the needs of the volunteer fire departments," "I hope this is not a setback in the agency" and many more. We want to wish Dave the best in future endeavours.

In other news, since speaking to the delegates at our June conference, Jim Garland, Director of Dispatch for Alberta Health, has developed a risk management form which has been posted on the AFCA website since September 13, 2010. Municipalities or fire departments who have had dispatch concerns should reply by filling in the form and returning it to Jim's office for follow up. You may also fax or e-mail the form to my office. My fax number is 780-892-3333 and my email address is bpurdy@xplornet.com.

AFCA President Brian Cornforth is working with Mike Boyd of Alberta Health

to move regulations forward regarding the dispatch of first responders, the role of first responders and air ambulances. In Fall 2008, the previous Minister of Health, Ron Liepert, urged the AFCA to establish a task force to work on the regulations. Unfortunately,

the task force never met, as delays were constantly imposed by the department of health. We are hopeful that Mike's leadership will move the process forward.

As a follow up to resolutions approved at the conference, resolutions were approved regarding increasing training grants, future funding for the retention recruitment task force, dispatch services and extending presumption cancer coverage for volunteer firefighters. The Executive Committee meets with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Employment and the Minister of Health and Wellness on October 7, 2010 and results of these meetings will be posted on the AFCA website.

In 2007, the AFCA engaged the services of Canadian Publishers to produce a twice per year magazine called "The Gazette" for three years. After serious consideration, the AFCA Board decided not to renew the contract with Canadian Publishers and by RFP to invite publishing companies to bid on a five-year contract.

Effective December 1, 2010, Rose Country Advertising and Public Relations of



Edmonton will be the publishers for the Gazette. Different from Canadian Publisher, Rose Country will contact the fire chief before soliciting donations from the local business community. With Canadian Publishers, fire chiefs were receiving enquiries from businesses and could not determine if the solicitation was legitimate.

A planning meeting was held September 22, 2010 with a number of fire-related organization to seek common ground. The groups that attended the meeting were The Fire Investigators of Alberta, The Training Officers, Search and Rescue Alberta, Partners in Protection and the Emergency Managers. The groups have had two meetings, and the meeting will include a facilitator. As progress is made I will report it on the AFCA website.

I welcome your comments and ideas about other areas that we should be communicating about. 🔥

The website (www.afca.ab.ca) has a host of useful documents as well as the AFCA Bookstore with categories that include Action Training, IFSTA, Fire Engineering, NFPA, FITS, Jones & Bartlett, Delmar-Cengage/Nelson Education, Brady/Pearson, Mosby/Elsevier, Emergency Film Group, and Rapid Fire. For information about the Bookstore please contact Allen Mercier toll free at 1-866-457-9011, or by email at ajmercy@telus.net.

Preparing our communities

BY KYLIE-JANE DEGELING, Training Officer, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT if we knew hours in advance precisely where a tornado was going to touch down?

Or months in advance that a major flood would engulf a particular town? If we had a crystal ball to tell us exactly when and where disaster would strike, life would be considerably easier.

Or would it? If people knew for certain that these events were actually heading their way, they would surely take action. A family learning that

a devastating snowstorm

would be hitting their community in three weeks would probably ensure they had

emergency food and water packed away

in their basements, as well as having such important items as

a radio, flashlight and first aid kit handy. Home

owners knowing for certain

that overland flooding was going

to hit in the next few months would likely be racing around their home to check for potential leaks, ensuring adequate slope to their property while repairing any cracks in their foundation. That all seems like a lot of work, yet we'd do it because we realise that preparing for a known emergency could substantially reduce the amount of work

we'd need to do during and after the event to survive and recover. Preparation goes a long way to making us more resilient.

In the absence of a crystal ball, all we can do is hope people will take the risks seriously and remember that major emergencies can happen anywhere, any time. We can remind people that preparedness can go a long way to ensuring they're prepared in the event that disaster strikes.

During my travels around the province as an AEMA Emergency Training Officer, I survey my classes about their personal preparedness. Even though the majority of my students are people who actually work

in emergency services, they are – like most others in their communities – unprepared for an emergency in their own home.

As I ask each class to put up their hands if they have a 72-hour preparedness kit, they glance around at each other, looking a bit embarrassed followed with relief that they aren't the only one not raising their hands. We laugh about it, I remind them where they can find information about preparing a kit and hope that the next time I return for a course, they will have a different response to my question.

But why stop there?

Besides getting our emergency services

prepared so that they can feel

comfortable about leaving their families

while they go off to respond to a

major event, it would be fantastic if we could

also get our citizens to take


the same approach. If we do that, maybe we'll be able to sleep better at night rather than having nightmares about those people we tried to help but weren't able to get to in time. Maybe we'll be less stressed about asking people to stay in their homes during a blizzard, knowing that they have ample supplies to keep them going for several days.

Basically – I propose that every municipality make a point of putting out an article (newsletter, local newspaper or even post it on a bulletin board) reminding their citizens of what is coming up the next season. Something like, "We're heading into winter, so here are some preparations you can make to keep your family safe!" or "Fire season is just around the corner, have you cleared out your gutters and prepared your

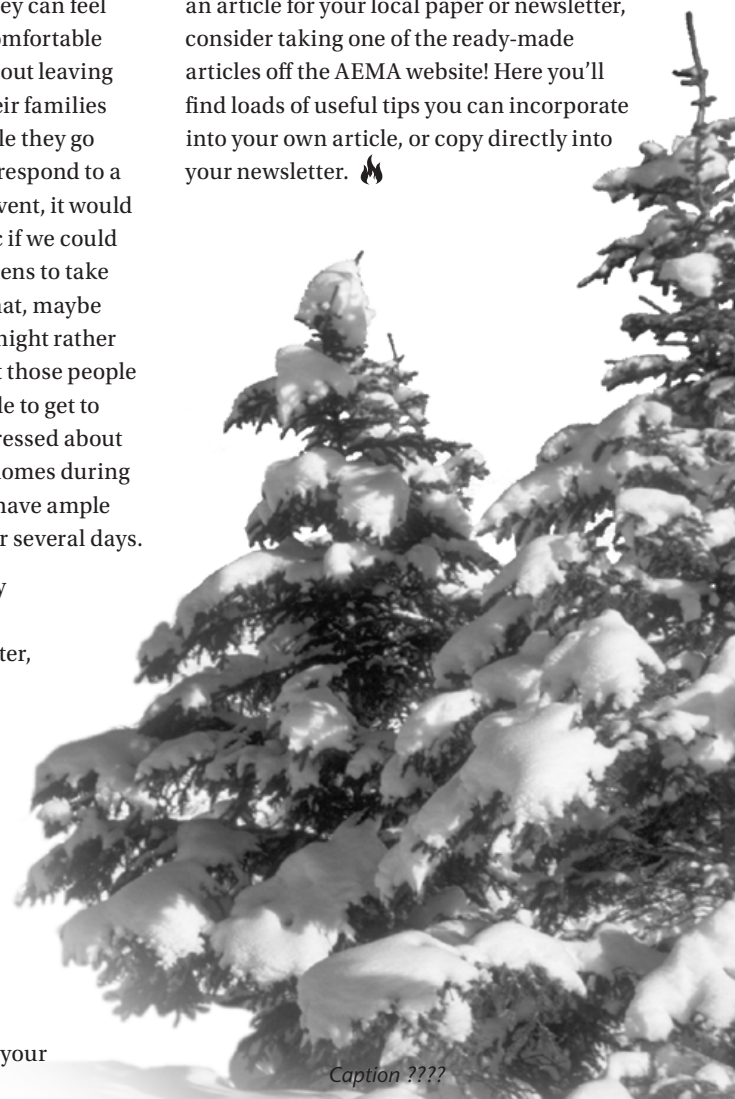
home for the possibility of wildfires? Follow our handy tips to preparing your home."

And while we're at it, reminders about preparing for incidents where dangerous goods are involved. For example, we could publish an article in our newsletters and papers about the meaning of "Shelter in place" and explain that if told to do so, residents should turn off their furnaces, air conditioning units, close their windows and doors and stay indoors if there was a risk of breathing in hazardous gasses.

We don't have a crystal ball, but wherever we live – from hamlets to major cities – there are ways we can communicate with our friends, families and residents to encourage them to prepare for a major emergency.

Note: If you don't have the resources to write an article for your local paper or newsletter, consider taking one of the ready-made articles off the AEMA website! Here you'll find loads of useful tips you can incorporate into your own article, or copy directly into your newsletter. 

"We're heading into winter, so here are some preparations you can make to keep your family safe!"



Caption ????

A Sleepless Fire Service



the FIRE WITHIN

BY CHAD SARTISON, Firefighter, Priddis Fire Department, Founder & Chair, *The Fire Within* – chad@thefirewithin.ca, www.thefirewithin.org

THERE IS NOT A CHIEF OUT THERE who does not lose at least one night's sleep a year over his fire department!

Maybe it's recruitment and retention, perhaps it's firefighter safety, morale or the almighty dollar. Either way, there are over 365 chiefs in Alberta losing at least one night's sleep. Add them all together and we are a fire service full of insomniacs. The problem is that our customers sleep like babies – and they should, dammit! We are firefighters and we always get the job done!

The problem is that we are on a slippery slope and gravity is a constant. As time goes on, I assure you that belief will not be enough. The love and passion will not be enough and hard work will not be enough to overcome the momentum of gravity.

Times are changing and here is a perfect example. I have no opinion on the details of the case but, to the best of my knowledge, for the first time in Canada, an Ontario volunteer fire chief and his officers are being sued for negligence in the death of one of their firefighters and, unfortunately, trying hard and making the best with what you have just isn't going to cut it in a court of law. Their futures and possibly their freedom are at stake and it's no joke!

As a front-line volunteer firefighter, few things sicken me more than hearing the statement "NFPA is just a recommendation." I guess it is ... that is until the day something goes wrong and a great legal mind like my friend Steve who works hard in his law firm in Calgary asks the question, "Why are you not following your own recommended standards to keep you safe?"

A good ol' boy pat on the back or a "not to worry, we tried our best" just doesn't cut it in today's society. And with the ramifications of Bill C-45 yet to be fully tested as it pertains to volunteer departments, I would suggest sleepless nights are destined to increase.

In 2004, C-45 amendments provided sweeping new rules for attributing criminal liability to organizations and their representatives. Think it does not apply? Here is an excerpt straight from the bill:

"Every one who undertakes, or has the authority, to direct how another person does work or performs a task is under a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent bodily harm to that person, or any other person, arising from that work or task."

"These provisions of the Criminal Code affect all organizations and individuals who direct the work of others, anywhere in Canada. These organizations include federal, provincial and municipal governments, corporations, private companies, charities and non-governmental organizations."

Canadian Center for Health Occupational Safety (2010)

How is this relevant to my story? Well, today a fire chief told me that his town Chief Administrative Officer would not provide the details of his firefighters' life insurance policies, saying that "what they have is good enough."

Last month, a different fire chief vented that he had been passed up on some essential safety equipment for his firefighters because it was relevant in less than 3 per cent of his calls.

I could go on and I am sure you could add to this list. The problem is that most fire chiefs shut the door and complain. I am saying "open the door and talk" because "you" will be left holding the bag if "I" get hurt or, worse yet, killed!

I know it is all about money and economic realities, but in the absence of making your superiors and the public we serve accountable for their decisions, it is you that will be left to explain yourself to my beautiful wife as everybody else works busily protecting themselves from liability.

Indifference to the fire service is rampant throughout government and the public we serve. I have sold Fire Within calendars with firefighters across this great country and I can't count the number of times someone has said to me "I don't want to buy a calendar, I pay my taxes" or "I have given enough today!"

Really? Did you get up at three in the morning to cut a child out of a car and get back just in time to kiss your kids good morning and go to work for eight hours? "The insurance that protects your firefighters is good enough, trust me!" Are you kidding me?

Unfortunately, this seed of indifference was planted by those before you and continues to be nurtured and fertilized by us. However, if we accept accountability for the indifference, we can change it.

Humbleness gets you nowhere in business and I am talking about the business of firefighting! **Anybody who thinks "The Fire Within" is about calendars just hasn't been listening. It's about change, its about messaging and its about the community and your fire department's connection to it.**

Next to the fire chief, your Public Information Officer is the second most important position in the fire department. Do you even have one? Sorry, deputy chiefs, nothing personal. It is just that the more your public understands what you do, the more apt they will be to support your requests.

Make your elected officials accountable for their decisions (they hate it when I say that). But they are correct when they say they don't serve you, they serve the public and if the public does not say it is important, then it is not important.

Every department should publish a monthly or, at minimum, a quarterly update in their local press informing your public about the business of your department. We are a public service and should be reporting

*“As time goes on,
I assure you that belief will
not be enough. The love and
passion will not be enough
and hard work will not be
enough to overcome the
momentum of gravity.”*

direct to the public (they hate it when I say that as well).

It really does not matter what you say as long as you keep it positive and informative. Your update should include the goals and objectives for your department, your mission statement, call volumes


and volunteer hours provided. A U.S. government website even provides a free calculator that calculates the amount of money a department saved its community versus a career service (email me if you would like this link).

A classic example I like to use of a real-life equipment update is a department that asked for ice rescue equipment and was summarily turned down. The department stated the facts in their update that the request had been turned down and to compensate they would be providing mutual aid support from their neighbouring department that would be responding from 45 minutes away. The public read the update in the paper and responded. They now have their ice rescue equipment and the training to go with it! That is democracy at work! That is what happens when you have your door open and you talk. That is what The Fire Within is about!

As for Bill C-45, all I can say is get everything in writing, including your disagreement with the decision, and file it in perpetuity!

When you hear “your firefighters insurance is adequate,” respond with “that is great to hear. Can you please provide me with a signed letter stating that fact within the week.”

When you hear “Sorry you only go on 50 calls a year, your bunker gear is adequate and will have to last another 10 years,” reply with “thank you for your response to my request for bunker gear. NFPA guidelines clearly state ... I respectfully request recommendations from your office on how to mitigate the increased exposure of risk to my firefighters.”

Over time, an open fire service and a well-documented paper trail will be as good as a warm cup of milk and your favorite teddy bear. Like you don't have a teddy bear! Sleep tight. 

Digest

Free ordering of fire safety and emergency preparedness items can be costly!

Most Alberta fire departments are now familiar with the Internet-based ordering system that AEMA has created to allow easy and fast ordering of fire safety and emergency preparedness publications from a central warehouse by accessing the website at: http://www.aema.gov.ab.ca/ps_fire_safety_publications.cfm

AEMA continues to monitor this easy ordering initiative with a view to making available fire safety and emergency preparedness publications free of charge. It has come to our attention that the cost of meeting an order can become prohibitive on very small orders.

Ride to Conquer Cancer update

Further to an item listed in the May 2010 Digest page of Alberta On Scene, we followed up with Gerold “Jerry” Koesling, Gloria Mercer’s brother-in-law. Jerry participated in his first Ride to Conquer Cancer in honour of Gloria. The ride took place on June 26 & 27, 2010 and Jerry is thrilled to advise that he exceeded his fundraising goal of \$2,500. In fact, he raised over \$3,100.



Gerold “Jerry” Koesling


According to Jerry the ride was scheduled to be 200 km but in the end it totaled 220 km, with 115 km on the first day and the 105 km the second day. And, he’s already registered to do the ride again in 2011.

The pricing structure for warehousing costs is activity-based and consists of a set charge for picking & packing each order regardless of how many items are being requested plus a line item charge and courier costs. Any order, especially of a single copy of a book, booklet or a pamphlet will automatically be charged with the sum of these costs. This means that the distribution charge for an order of one pamphlet with a low value will amount to a charge much greater than the item itself!

Solution: Clients are therefore advised to review all available items in the catalog and submit an order that will encompass all item requirements for several months in support of public fire prevention programming in their jurisdictions.

“It was a very moving experience and I’m looking forward to next year,” said Jerry. Along with the ride being an experience I’m glad I didn’t miss, two days before the ride an old friend who I hadn’t seen in 14 years contacted me on Facebook and said that what I was doing was a great thing. She also advised that she has a 2 ½ year old son who has tumours in his spine and brain and has already gone through 30 chemo treatments. I guess as time ticks on, I’ll always have a reason to ride again.”

Changes at AEMA’s Fire Statistics Section

Shannon Powell, who served as the temporary Data Analyst, from July 2009 to September 2010, is away on maternity leave until September 2011. The new temporary Data Analyst, Nancy-Jo Morin, can be reached at 780-415-9481 or email at: nancy-jo.morin@gov.ab.ca 

►► Continued from cover.

“Fernandez also points out that in addition to helping firefighters, the missions also help the communities as a whole.”

As president of the Canadian Aid for Fire Services Abroad (CAFSA), Fernandez has considerable experience in what it takes to put together a mission. Along with Lyall Hutchinson, a fellow member of the St. Albert Fire Service, both men have been involved in several missions over the past few years. But this time, their mission had even more impact. Instead of providing equipment and supplies for use in the event of an emergency, the May 2010 mission took place on the heels of an actual emergency that had recently occurred.

Together with first time mission volunteers Trent West and Ed van Delden, the May 2010 mission saw the arrival of two fire trucks (donated by Dow Chemical in Fort Saskatchewan) and one 20-foot sea container full of firefighter gear, personal protective equipment and various firefighter tools of the trade.



Some of the Chillan firefighters together with, from left to right in the back row, Victor Fernandez, Ed van Delden, Lyall Hutchinson and Trent West.



Group photo of the 2010 mission volunteers together with members of the Chillan Fire Department.



The two trucks donated by Dow Chemical of Canada prior to their delivery to Chillan, Chile.

“We were treated like kings and people were so appreciative of the equipment familiarization that was provided,” said

West. “For me, one of the highlights was going to the school that received two wood-burning stoves for heat in their classrooms. The celebration was fabulous and the parents, teachers and students put on an excellent display.”

Fernandez added, “these trips really are an eye opener. You can read about it and think about it, but until you take part

in a mission you don’t get the full sense of it or how much of a difference it makes. The feelings, the smells, the atmosphere ...they really come together on a trip. And everyone is so appreciative of the donated equipment.”

Fernandez also points out that in addition to helping firefighters, the missions also help the communities as a whole. On a previous mission to Guatemala, he signed a contract with the local fire chief to ensure that the water truck that was delivered would not sit waiting for a fire to be used. Instead, it was put into action right away delivering water around the community, for crops, for washing clothes, etc. As Fernandez points out, “these missions put a whole new perspective on recycling.”

Honouring a hero

"With every mission I've organized, a magical moment always seems to appear. The mission to Chillan was no different," said CAFSA President Victor Fernandez. "We had heard about a firefighter, Ricardo Maureira, who is a Captain with the Chillan Fire Department, who had recently risked his life to save four young children. Equipped only with 40-year old equipment and rubber boots, he entered the building with no breathing apparatus to save these children.



Ed van Delden and night shift captain Ricardo Maureira.

The heat of the blaze melted his boots and his arms were badly burned too. We wanted to provide something special for this firefighter who was recognized by the town as a hero. We had a lot of donated firefighter jackets, but none fit him. Finally after trying on several, the only jacket that fit him was one formerly worn by Ed van Delden. It seemed like fate," said Fernandez. "Ed joined the mission this year, and here it was an old jacket of his that perfectly fit Ricardo Maureira. We were pleased to also share with him some of the breathing apparatus we brought with us."



Ed van Delden instructs a Chillan firefighter about the instrumentation of one of the donated fire trucks.

What's involved in a mission?

While each mission takes about 10 days, the actual preparation takes a lot longer – about 11 months. In addition to talking to people about donations, a lot of time is needed to collect donated equipment, clean it, inventory it, package it and then send it out. In fact, it takes over 100 pages of paperwork per fire truck that is donated to a community in South America. Added to that is the levels of bureaucracy within Canada Customs and the levels of bureaucracy and sometimes corruption to deal with in the country to which it is being sent.

In the 10 years since Fernandez created the CAFSA, they have raised about \$9,000, and about \$2.5 million in donations. He encourages everyone to consider donating used equipment to CAFSA to help with future missions. If you are interested in donating used equipment or volunteering for a mission, visit the foundation website at www.cafsa.net.

“The Chillan fire services responded to 100+ emergency calls after the earthquake and worked tirelessly 24/7 for days after the earthquake.”



Victor Fernandez watches as Chillan firefighters look at the fire equipment donations.

"I hope this wasn't a 'once in a lifetime experience' as I would really like to help Victor and CAFSA again in the future with other projects he may have," said West. "This trip made me feel 20 years

younger and I would recommend to anyone to support CAFSA and also consider attending one of their future missions."

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“...the May 2010 mission took place on the heels of an actual emergency that had recently occurred.”

2010 mission snapshot

- Chillan, Chile, the nearest city to the epicenter of the 8.8 earthquake.
- Population of 170,000 people.



The remains of one of the Chillan fire department trucks.



The Chillan Fire Department presents Trent West with a token of their appreciation.

- Fire service for the city consisted of eight fire stations, seven working sets of breathing apparatus.
- Earthquake destroyed four of the fire stations.
- While every fire station had a fire truck, the building collapsing on top of them, leaving them non-operational.
- The Chillan fire services responded to 100+ emergency calls after the earthquake and worked tirelessly 24/7 for days after the earthquake.
- The 2010 mission donated 53 sets of breathing apparatus, two trucks and numerous other supplies. 🔥

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