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Bringing a wealth of experience to the position

New Fire Commissioner named

Pat Graham has been named the new Fire Commissioner of Alberta. He replaces Tom Makey, who retired on April 30, 2001 after serving as the Fire Commissioner since October 1987.

As mentioned in the August 2001 edition of *Alberta Fire News*, Graham brings a wealth of experience to the position. Prior to moving into the Fire Commissioner's Office

he served as the Fire Chief of the Municipal District of Rocky View No. 44. Graham also spent many years with the Victoria, B.C. fire department, first as a firefighter before progressing through a number of positions including Lieutenant Investigator and Deputy Fire Chief. He also provided fire safety and emergency response services for Alberta's Solicitor General. 



Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham, already a devoted **Fire News** reader

Meetings November 7 and 8

Fire chiefs focus on the future


Paid fire chiefs, deputy chiefs and designated representatives from across the province gathered on November 7 and 8 in Edmonton to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the fire service in Alberta. The meeting generated productive discussion on issues such as education programs for children, delivery of services, intermunicipal cooperation and municipal emergency planning.



AFCFA President and County of Strathcona Fire Chief Laird Burton (in background) and AFCFA Executive Director Bill McKay (right) recognize Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier as an honorary member of the AFCFA with gifts of a white fire helmet and plaque.

the first minister to receive the title. "I feel extremely privileged to receive this honour," he said. "The AFCFA plays such an integral role in ensuring our province's safety and I support its efforts."

In light of recent world events, the group talked about biological and chemical threats and how they relate to municipal emergency personnel. Roles and responsibilities as well as planning, training and testing emergency plans were all discussed.

"It was a really effective meeting," said Alberta's Fire Commissioner Pat Graham. "I think we're on the right track with our programs and services and we have lots of plans for the future." 

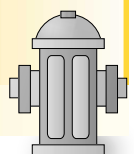
To begin the meeting, Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier was named an honorary member of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCFA). Boutilier is



 *The Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office wishes you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.*

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Fire department changes with the times in Municipal District of Big Lakes

The Municipal District of Big Lakes, a rural community of over 4,500 people is going through major changes in its fire service, the first being the hiring of John E. Gould as its first full-time paid fire chief/emergency services coordinator. Big Lakes lies north, south and west of Lesser Slave Lake, and includes the large oil field surrounding the Town of Swan Hills.

Twenty-three years of combined military fire/administration and civilian fire service, including three years as an Assistant Fire Marshall in the Northwest Territories, provide Chief Gould with a strong background to fulfill his duties as the new fire chief for the M.D. of Big Lakes Fire Department.

Chief Gould is responsible for the management of fire protection services over 15,000 square kilometres. His duties include managing four volunteer fire departments with a total of 80 volunteers. The volunteer fire departments are located in the hamlets of Enilda, Grouard, Jousard and Faust. Each department has a fire chief and a complement of volunteer firefighters. Gould's firefighters also serve as first responders for oilfields in the M.D. and are responsible for evacuation services.

According to Chief Gould, much of his efforts since accepting the position of Fire Chief in October 2000 have been focused on getting the fire department up and



Firefighters participating in Volunteer Recognition Day activities organized by Fire Chief John Gould

running, and providing structured training for the 80 volunteer firefighters. "My first two priorities were the safety and training needs of the firefighters. In fact, one of our first steps was purchasing \$74,000 worth of National Fire Protection Association-rated self-contained breathing apparatuses from Mine Safety Association."

Gould's next focus was on training. A structured training plan was set up, which includes training on a regular basis (once or twice a month) at each of the fire halls. "I go to each fire hall and instruct theory and practical sessions, focusing on a different aspect each time and then leave a video behind to reinforce what was taught," said Gould. "I want to make sure that all our firefighters have the knowledge and training they need to respond to emergency situations."

Gould acknowledges that right now his priorities aren't on prevention or education in the community. We do provide some prevention and education, but right now it's on a day-to-day basis as we interact with the community. It's an area that we are planning for and will most likely move into in the near future."

In addition to the focus on safety and training, Gould has also been busy in other areas. In September 2001, the M.D. hosted a table-top exercise on emergency



Members of the Enilda Fire Department

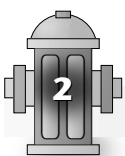
response which was held in the Town of High Prairie. The exercise involved agencies such as fire, ambulance, police, health services and industry from within the M.D. of Big Lakes. "While it's our first time hosting, many of the players have been involved in other emergency response exercises," stated Chief Gould.

The M.D. of Big Lakes was incorporated in January 1995, after 90 years as an Improvement District. Eighteen months later, in June 1996, the M.D. was declared a disaster area due to a flood. Total municipal infrastructure damage exceeded \$1 million. A lot has changed since that time, and the addition of a paid full-time fire chief/emergency services coordinator is improving the safety of this small rural community. 🔥

For more information about the M.D. of Big Lakes Fire Department, check out its web site at: www.mdbiglakes.ca



Members of the Kinuso Fire Department



Growing community means growing fire department for City of Spruce Grove

Consider a city where the growth rate is one of the fastest in Alberta. Add to that the transition from volunteer firefighters to casual, paid positions and you have a glimpse into the world of Robert Kosterman, the new Fire Chief for the City of Spruce Grove. Kosterman was previously the Fire Chief/Supervisor of Protective Services for the City of Cold Lake before moving to his position with Spruce Grove in July 2001.

With a projected five per cent growth rate, Spruce Grove is one of Western Canada's fastest growing communities. Strategically located only 10 minutes west of Edmonton, the community of just over 16,000 residents offers all the advantages of a major centre while retaining the charm of a rural community.

In addition to fire protection, Spruce Grove Fire Services offers fire prevention and education programs, business inspections and disaster services. The staff complement consists of five full-time staff—the chief, three firefighters and a full-time secretary—and 27 casual paid firefighters.

According to Spruce Grove's fire chief, the transition of firefighters from volunteer to paid positions has been a two-year process. "It's gone quite well, and from the start there were favourable discussions with a committee of firefighters," said Kosterman. "The fire service is growing along with the city, so it's a natural progression to move to these positions."

The full-time staff work Monday to Friday, with evenings and weekends covered by casual staff. As well, some city employees are also firefighters and, in the case of a daytime fire, they would bring the second unit to the scene. Kosterman also points out that Spruce Grove has a mutual aid agreement with nearby Stony Plain, which would be used for additional resources.

The fire service equipment includes three pumbers, a rescue vehicle and two park

protection units (brush trucks). "The City of Spruce Grove is interconnected by a beautiful 200 hectare trail system running through the middle of city," said Kosterman. "Because of the urban interface around this parkland, our park protection units are dedicated to protecting the parkland and never leave the city."

Ambulance service is provided by the Parkland Ambulance Authority, which is co-owned by the City of Spruce Grove. "The two ambulances are stationed in our fire hall," said Kosterman, "but they are serviced by their own staff. We have a great working relationship with their emergency response department."

Kosterman states that his firefighters are kept very busy. Recent statistics break down the incidence of fires at 15 per cent structural; 26 per cent medical, with the rest combined in hazardous materials, vehicle fires and false alarms.

In addition to fighting fires, the Spruce Grove fire department is involved in plan reviews of every development proposed. A review takes place at the development stage, before rezoning, and again at the permit application stage, working in consort with the building inspector. According to Kosterman, his full-time firefighters inspect every commercial occupancy building every year.

The fire department is also involved with fire prevention in the community. "All our schools use the *Learn Not to Burn* program and our Senior Captain Don Deagenhart looks after it," says Kosterman. "During Fire Prevention Week, we also place banners around the city, conduct evacuation drills at all schools and city-owned buildings, and hold a



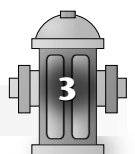
Spruce Grove's fire and EMS personnel responding to a roll-over

"Chief for a Day" contest." As well, school tours at the fire hall are a constant activity, both for Spruce Grove schools and those in outlying areas.

"Our community is really committed to fire prevention," says Kosterman. "In fact, all major streets into the city have 'prevent fires' painted on the pavement."

Spruce Grove is one of three communities involved in the construction of the \$28 million Tri-Municipal Family Leisure Centre. Promising to be a dynamic space, full of energy and activity, the centre will include indoor fields for soccer, lacrosse and trade shows; indoor ice rinks for hockey and recreational skating; an aquatic centre, that includes hot pools, warm water leisure pools and plenty of space for swim meets; a community resource centre, including a number of community rooms for program activities, meetings and special occasions; and a children's play area and water zone.

The complex, which is slated to open June 2002, will provide yet another reason for the continued growth of Spruce Grove and its need for a dynamic and dedicated fire service. 🔥



Rocky View's Risk Watch a community venture

Continuing our profile of Risk Watch activities across Alberta, this issue of *Alberta Fire News* focuses on the Municipal District of Rocky View.

Since its introduction to schools in 1999, the Risk Watch program has experienced tremendous success and growth in the M.D. of Rocky View. Much of this success is attributed to support from the community, says Ken McMullen, the recently appointed Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) with the Rocky View Fire Service.

As the new FPO, Ken assumes responsibility for the Risk Watch program, but he's already been involved with it through his position as training officer with the department.

Cindy Payne, who is now the Deputy Chief, started the introduction of the program in Rocky View schools. "It's a real community effort," says McMullen. "Parents are involved, the RCMP is involved, and local businesses too."

A coalition was formed, including one school administrator, one teacher and a representative from fire, police and health services. Travelling to Boston for their training, the coalition found the training so motivating that they couldn't wait to hold their first meeting, so they held it on the plane on the way back to Canada.

Representatives from other districts have been invited to the Rocky View workshops and now the Airdrie Fire and Emergency Services and Cochrane are in the beginning stages of implementing Risk Watch into their Rocky View schools.

According to McMullen, one of the things that makes their program stand out is the material provided to the teachers. Resource tubs are provided free-of-charge to the schools and include actual items that are discussed in the session, such as a car seat, a helmet, and other items. "Kids are tactile, so providing items that they can actually see and touch helps reinforce the



Fire Prevention Officer Ken McMullen providing fire prevention education to the Prince of Peace Lutheran School, one of the first schools to pilot Risk Watch in the M.D. of Rocky View.

education," said Cammie Laird, Rocky View Fire Chief. "We also provide teachers with a box of items they need throughout the year, like erasers and pencils that can be handed out to students. We include a box of Smarties for the teachers too!"

"In addition to the resource tubs and teacher hand-out items, we provide a comprehensive list of different resources," said McMullen. "We provide two different library lists, one for our local library and one for the Calgary Public Library. These library lists are coordinated with all the resources in the module."


Equally important though, says McMullen, is the support received from the community. For example, Val Foreman, a volunteer from the community who has worked with us on the Risk Watch program for many years, compiles our resource lists. Her lists are greatly appreciated. They make the program extremely accessible for teachers, parents and students," said McMullen.

McMullen states that their focus is on working on a team basis with the teachers. Other special touches of the Rocky View program include leather bound diaries for teachers with the Risk Watch logo on the front. "Every year we provide something a little different," said Chief Laird.

Rocky View's Risk Watch success also benefited two of its teachers who attended the National Fire Prevention Association's fall education conference last year in Orlando, Florida. "These were the only two teachers from Alberta to attend the conference, so it was a really great opportunity

for them," said McMullen.

Rocky View is also working with the Calgary Fire Department on its first partnership program. Through the "Train the Trainers" workshop, 15 fire department personnel are being trained to assist with school workshops.

The Risk Watch program has been implemented in seven schools so far. "We are committed to continuing the program," said McMullen, "but we want to implement it on a phased-in basis. Our goal is to have every school in the M.D. of Rocky View involved." 



Alberta Learning approves Risk Watch

Two meetings were held to discuss *Risk Watch* from the perspective of Alberta Learning and the Alberta Fire Service. A preliminary meeting was held on September 6, 2001, attended by Gina Vivone-Vernon, Director, Learning and Teaching Resources Branch, Mark Buckley, Manager Health, Career & Life Management, and Pat Graham, Wayne Girven and Mahendra Wijayasinghe from the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO).

The FCO presented the latest statistics on childhood deaths and non-fatal injuries in Canada and Alberta to show that *Risk Watch* covers the major injury causes in children. It was recognized that there is no other comparable injury prevention program at present, and that *Risk Watch* is well laid out for use by teachers, and is a very useful teaching resource. The FCO also pointed out that the 22 fire/burn safety behaviours in the *Learn Not to Burn* program are now distributed in the five *Risk Watch* binders.

Discussion also focused on a number of fire and emergency departments throughout the province that were actively involved in promoting and sustaining *Risk Watch* in their communities. Also, that the Fire Commissioner's Office has promoted *Risk Watch* at annual teachers' conventions, and distributed nearly \$300,000 in municipal grants related to the purchase and distribution of *Risk Watch* binders to schools through some 140 municipal fire departments. A series of province-wide workshops on *Risk Watch*, coordinated by the FCO, has also been presented by Captain Tim Vandenbrink of the Edmonton Emergency Response Department and National Fire Protection Association representative for Western Canada.

Another meeting took place October 11th between Alberta Learning, the fire service and other representatives to discuss the *Risk Watch* program. Participants included Gina Vernon-Vivone and Mark Buckley of

Alberta Learning and the following fire service and regional health authority (RHA) representatives:

- Pat Graham, Wayne Girven and Mahendra Wijayasinghe of the Fire Commissioner's Office
- Tim Vandenbrink and Dick Veldhuis of Edmonton Emergency Response
- Brian McEvoy and Lida Thompson (RHA) of Bonnyville
- Denis Driver and Angela Dixon of Grande Prairie
- Fred Mayer of Medicine Hat
- Garry Burns and Garth Rabel of Calgary
- Cameron Sonnenberg of Ft. McMurray
- Don Rosland of Camrose
- Chris Senaratne of the Alberta Fire Training School, Vermilion
- Dave Martin of St. Albert
- Marian Walsh of Strathcona County
- Cammie Laird of Rocky View

Key discussion points of the meeting:

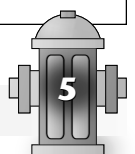
- Alberta Learning has reviewed five binders of the *Risk Watch* program for the Health and Life Skills Curriculum for Grades K-9. ***Risk Watch* binders for Grades pre-K/K and 5/6 have met the outcomes of Alberta Learning and have been approved as resources that support the Health and Life Skills Curriculum.** Although *Risk Watch* binders for Grades 1/2, 3/4 and 7/8 did not match the curriculum needs, they can be used in schools if teachers wish, according to Alberta Learning.
- The Fire Commissioner's Office will work in conjunction with Alberta Learning to include descriptions of *Risk Watch* in the *Guide to Implementation*, a document which provides instructional strategies to teachers.
- Fire or emergency services departments that have already implemented *Risk Watch* in their communities can continue these activities together with their partners. When promoting *Risk Watch*, the approval of Pre-K/K and Grade 5/6 binders by Alberta Learning



will help sell the program along with the injury statistics for children (May 2001 Fire News).

- It was recognized that communities such as Grande Prairie, Bonnyville and Rocky View, among others, have adapted a comprehensive community-oriented approach to the teaching of injury prevention to school children. Various local partnerships and corporate/government funding have resulted in successful implementation of *Risk Watch* in these communities. Alberta Learning looks favourably on such community-based approaches rather than a total dependence on the school system to deliver injury prevention messages.
- The possibility of the development of a new injury prevention program for Alberta school children, that will be linked to outcomes determined by Alberta Learning, was discussed and agreed upon by all present. A subcommittee to examine this option is to be set up. 🔥

The Fire Commissioner's Office has appointed Mahendra Wijayasinghe to chair a subcommittee to coordinate this effort and the *Risk Watch* program. To contact him call (780) 427-8392.



Female firefighters—not a new phenomenon

Throughout Alberta, hundreds of firefighters are busy protecting our homes, properties and businesses. Did you know that many of those firefighters are women?

Many people think of firefighters as male, but women have been involved in the fire service for many years. In fact, when former fire chief Wayne Stanyer started recruiting for the new Sherwood Park Fire Department in 1956, the majority of recruits were women. "We started the fire department in November 1956," said Stanyer. "The hamlet was just being built so not many people lived here and there were hardly any men around during the day. Several women said if they could get some training, they'd volunteer. So we ended up with about six women on the fire department."

Over the years, the number of women involved in the fire service has continued to grow and their skills and abilities have enabled them to obtain a variety of positions, from firefighter to fire chief.

The Irricana Station 56 in Rocky View has a 50/50 split of female and male firefighters. Cindy Payne, current Deputy Chief for the Rocky View Fire Service, got her start at the 56 Station in Irricana, Alberta.

"I had an administration background and worked for the Bank of Montreal," says Payne. "The Bank of Montreal promoted volunteerism in the community. Irricana was starting up a new fire department and I thought it would be a good place to volunteer. The rest is history." Payne moved from firefighter to lieutenant to station officer and when the opportunity came up in 1996 she applied for a full-time position as Assistant Fire Chief. Payne says that working for the fire service came naturally to her. "I did very well in my exams, which encouraged me to continue and the practical work was not a problem."

"Being a female and holding a rank in the service has not always been easy but that's because I'm hardest on myself," added Payne. "I have always received the utmost respect

from my fellow officers and both past and current fire chiefs. Having a very dedicated group of volunteers within our service has made the difference. Most importantly, the support of my three children and my parents has seen me through any stressful times."

Cammie Laird, current fire chief for the Municipal District of Rocky View Fire Service, expressed a similar route into the fire service. She got her start in the fire service through a summer job. "As soon as I got involved, I knew it was my thing," said Laird.

In the service since 1982, Laird says she wanted to follow her aspirations and dreams to be in the fire service, and moving up to be fire chief was part of that dream. "I was lucky to fall into a very dynamic area," says Laird of her position with the Rocky View Fire Service. "I'm working with a very team-oriented group of people both in the Fire Chief's Office and in the municipality."

Laird continually upgrades her fire knowledge and is involved in several fire service affiliations. Formerly Region 2 Director for the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, Laird is now an Assistant Director for Region 5, the Executive Director for the Alberta Montana Association of Fire Service Instructors, the Executive Director of the Alberta Association of Fire Service Instructors, a member of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors, a member of the Fire Investigation Association of Alberta and a member of the National Fire Protection Association.

Laird pointed out that the support from her husband has been invaluable. "I was with the fire department when I met him. After taking time off to have children,

I wanted to return to the fire service. He was the one who said, 'you can do this. It is what you want to do, so do it,'" said Laird. "In fire terms, I would equate it to the self-contained breathing apparatus. He's the breath of revitalization to sustain me."

Incidentally, when Laird first met her husband he wasn't with the fire service, but willingly accompanied her around the



Members of the M.D. of Rocky View Fire Service include, from left to right, Elizabeth Szamiscozy, Fire Prevention Officer Ken McMullen, Fire Chief Cammie Laird, Deputy Fire Chief Cindy Payne, Communications Officer Mike Depute, with fire dog Harley Johnson in front.

province. Laird says he's one of her best students and now serves as a Captain volunteer at the Ma-Me-O Beach fire department.

Many female fire personnel cite a personal incident as the start of their interest in the fire service. Irene Welecki, a full-time Confidential Administrative Assistant and volunteer firefighter with the Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority first became interested in the fire department as a result of a family experience.

"As a result of an incident in my family, I decided that I wanted to help others," said Welecki. "By the time I applied for the administrator position six years ago, I already had an interest in the fire service. But after I started working there, I realized that I knew very little about what a fire-



fighter did. I started coming to practices to get familiar with the terminology and to better understand exactly what firefighters do." Irene became so interested that she also started volunteering as a firefighter and began taking courses. "I'm only about four or five courses short of my 10-01," she states.

When asked if she has experienced any problems as a female firefighter, Welecki is quick to respond. "No, not all," she said. "In fact, I've actually been an asset at times. I recall one trailer fire where, due to my height (Irene is 4'10"), I was the only person small enough to crawl under the trailer and start pulling out the insulation to get to the fire source."

Cindy Payne also said a personal experience piqued her curiosity. A fire at her parent's country house when she was nine instilled in her a curiosity about the fire department. "I didn't understand what happened until I joined the fire department a number of years later as an adult. Today there are a lot of different programs out there like *Risk Watch* and *Learn Not to Burn* that can teach kids and families not just about fire safety but about all safety," said Payne. "Being a part of the fire service has allowed me to be part of something that I consider very important. Starting at the bottom and learning about fire behaviour and what we can do to control it is a job that I don't think I will ever be bored with."

Glenda Dales, Mundare's fire chief for the last three years, says that a fire on her property got her interested in the fire service. "A comment was made that the fire department needed help. I asked if they were interested in recruiting women, and they said, 'definitely' so 15 years ago, I became a firefighter," said Dales.

Dales says that she receives really good support from her family. Many times she's been called out to fires, which meant disrupted dinners, meals left in the oven for when her family arrives home or leaving while company is there. "My husband has been really supportive. He's not interested in the service himself, but he has really encouraged me throughout the different education levels and hasn't complained about the many hours away."

Dales sees the support not so much as a gender issue but really a spouse issue. "Being a firefighter means dedication and putting in lots of time, whether fighting fires or spending time at the fire hall. Without a supportive spouse, the job would be much more difficult."

In addition to her fire service responsibilities, Dales is also Secretary for the North Central Fire Protection and Safety Codes Group and is a member of the Fire Investigator Association of Alberta. She also runs her own business as a first aid instructor.

Laurie Moore, current Deputy Chief for the Calgary Fire Department, came into the fire service from a different angle. As its former Finance Controller, Moore's appointment to Deputy Chief made her the department's first female civilian in a Deputy Chief position. When the depart-

Currently, there are no statistics of how many women are in the fire service in Alberta. As Bonnyville Fire Chief Brian McEvoy points out, "I don't keep records by gender, just by individual firefighter." When asked how many of his firefighters were female, Brian had to do a manual count to come up with the number. Of his 171 firefighters, 22 are female.

According to Cindy Payne, "when we're out on the fire ground dealing with an incident, there is no gender issue at all."

Ken McMullen, the newly appointed Fire Prevention Officer for Rocky View and currently the only male in the Fire Chief's office, points out that working with Cammie and Cindy is a very positive experience. "They are both very dedicated professional women, and are extremely capable and knowledgeable," said McMullen. "We work together as a team, and respect one another."

Bill MacKay, former Alberta Fire Commissioner and current executive director of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, says increasing the number of women in the fire service is a positive thing. "Their skills are very complementary and are an asset to the service."

ment's restructuring created a new division, "I saw an opportunity where I could bring a broader set of skills to fire service management, so I applied," stated Moore. "From my controller position, I could see that a strategy perspective was lacking in the fire service. As a result we've created a Strategic Services Division that provides a proactive perspective to the service in terms of planning for the future as well as analyzing existing performance."

While there was some resistance at first, Moore says that now that they've had the opportunity to show what planning can do, it has opened the door in terms of support for Moore and her team members. She's also quick to thank Fire Chief Wayne Morris for his support. "He's a broad thinker with progressive ideas and recognizes that it takes more than fire

knowledge to run a business these days," said Moore.

Moore also serves on the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. Composed of 10 commissioners, Moore is the only female.

The Calgary Fire Department is slowly increasing its complement of female firefighters. Including the two currently in training, Calgary will soon have eight female firefighters in the department. "It's great to see an increase in the number of female firefighters," says Moore.

Besides the opportunity to make a contribution to the fire service, there are many positives to being a female in the fire service says Moore, "one of them being no line-ups for the washrooms!"





As a sign of respect, admiration and condolence, many fire services across Alberta held memorial services or conducted fundraising activities for firefighters involved in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. These photos were taken at the Edmonton Fire Service memorial that took place on September 19, 2001.


Partnership refocuses on terrorism threat

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 changed the world and caused us to question our safety and quality of life. In recognizing this, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein immediately established a Ministerial task force on security, to evaluate the impact of the events in the U.S. on Alberta. Halvar Johnson, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, is chair of the task force and Guy Boutilier, Minister of Municipal Affairs, is a member.

One of the directives of the task force was to bring the Alberta Emergency Preparedness Partnership together to help our province deal with the threat of terrorism and the hazards it presents. Many members of the fire service participated in a meeting on October 17, 2001 to refocus the partnership on dealing with the threat of terrorism in Alberta.

The partnership includes more than 60 organizations from businesses, the academic community, emergency services organizations, the health sector, municipalities, the military, the RCMP and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, as well as federal and provincial government departments and non-government organizations.

“We want to make sure Alberta is prepared to respond to any disasters or major emergencies that come our way. This wide network of support will assist us in carrying out this responsibility,” said Boutilier.

The partnership will work with the task force to address the security of municipal infrastructure and examine our water resources and the safeguards in place. 

*In memory of the many firefighters who
lost their lives during the rescue operations
at the World Trade Center in New York*

Photos courtesy of Howard Pruden, Edmonton Emergency Response Department



Taking steps to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning

With the winter season comes an increase in the use of heating appliances and an increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Referred to as the “silent killer,” carbon monoxide can’t be seen, touched, smelled, heard or tasted. Yet it causes death and illness each year. Both 1999 and 2000 saw three accidental carbon monoxide deaths in Alberta, a remarkable decrease from the 13 deaths in 1998.

Carbon monoxide is an odourless, colourless gas that interferes with the delivery of oxygen in the blood to the rest of the body. It is produced as a result of incomplete burning of carbon-containing fuels including coal, wood, charcoal, natural gas and fuel oil. It can be emitted by sources such as unvented kerosene and gas space heaters, furnaces, woodstoves, gas stoves, fireplaces and water heaters, automobile exhaust from attached garages and tobacco smoke. Problems can arise as a result of inadequate ventilation or ventilation that is not properly installed or maintained.

Many people have bought carbon monoxide detectors, but that alone isn’t enough. Knowing how to inspect them to ensure they are in working order is necessary too.

The devices are much like smoke alarms in that they can be purchased and easily installed in residences. Most importantly though, just like smoke alarms, battery-powered CO detectors need to have the batteries changed on a regular basis.

Many homes are now equipped with carbon monoxide detectors in addition to smoke alarms. In Ontario, carbon monoxide detectors are mandatory in all new residential buildings containing a fuel-burning appliance or garage.

Initial symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning are similar to the flu and include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, nausea and dizziness. Exposure to high levels of CO can cause death.

Other warning signs include stale or stuffy air, excessive moisture on windows and walls, soot build-up around appliances and vents, a yellow flame in a natural gas appliance rather than blue, and a pilot light that keeps going out.

Follow these important steps to prevent CO poisoning:

1. Properly install fuel-burning appliances, then use, maintain and inspect them on a regular basis.
2. Install a CO detector that is certified by Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

Remember, a CO detector is your second line of defence. It should never be used as a substitute for the safe use of vehicles and appliances. An annual inspection of your appliances by a qualified technician, and ensuring a window is open when using a wood-burning fireplace BEFORE LIGHTING THE FIRE are both necessary steps.
3. Conduct yearly inspections of your fuel-burning appliances. Here’s what to look for:

Gas-fired home furnaces and heating appliances

- Check for a clean burning flame
- Make sure fan compartment doors are closed
- Clear debris or obstructions blocking vents or your chimney
- Look for separated pipes, rust and holes on metal vent pipes and for staining or signs of carbon deposits (black marks) near vents, joints or burners

Check these areas for condensation and rust

Combustion odours

Check drafthoods

Furnace

Hot water tank

- Ensure there are no cracks or openings in any part that transmits heat (the heat exchanger)

Gas appliances

- Ensure that all heating appliances are connected to either an effective vent or chimney
- Check for a clean burning flame
- Rust, staining or signs of carbon deposits on appliances or vents are signs of improper combustion

Plastic vent pipes

- Check for cracks or separation at joints or signs of moisture or staining

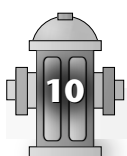
Wood-burning fireplaces

- Ensure that your home has a combustion air vent for the fireplace

RVs, campers and space heaters

- Check for a clean-burning flame
- A yellow flame is a warning signal—it indicates incomplete combustion and possibly the presence of carbon monoxide 🔥

Publications with detailed information about detecting carbon monoxide in residential and commercial establishments are available from the Fire Commissioner’s Office at (780) 427-8392.



The National Research Council's role in fire safety

Recently, the National Research Council (NRC) estimated the total cost of fire in Canada to be more than \$11 billion per year. For Canadians this represents an economic and human loss, and the NRC is concerned.

Research and analysis of fire problems is a major factor in fire education, suppression and training.

Through NRC, a government agency established in 1916, considerable efforts are made to improve products, training and education. As part of its Fire Risk Management Program, NRC's Institute for Research in Construction (IRC) is Canada's construction technology centre. Established in 1947, IRC provides research, building code development, and materials evaluation services. Working with partners, IRC addresses issues that have a large economic impact, assisting industry to innovate and develop technologies that are safe, durable and cost-effective.

The fire research staff at IRC form a team of engineers, physicists, chemists and environmental psychologists committed to developing effective solutions that reduce the high cost of fire and its negative impact on the Canadian economy and quality of life. The staff primarily focuses on research in three key areas: active fire protection, fire-resistant construction and fire risk assessment.

Active fire protection

Active Fire Protection aims to reduce the cost of fire damage by developing fire suppression, detection and smoke management systems for use in buildings and other applications.

IRC is developing fire suppression systems that offer alternatives to the banned Halon 1301 system. Halon protects many Canadian telephone exchanges, central computer installations and defence sites, yet in 1994 it was deemed harmful to the ozone layer. IRC is committed to finding alternatives through full-scale fire tests of water mist, and gaseous and streaming agents. This research is of particular interest to Albertans; according to Russ Thomas, Director, Fire Risk Management Program,

"We've been developing some new kinds of suppression techniques based on compressed air foam. These systems use a lot less water than traditional systems. These are very useful in areas where there isn't a lot of water available, like the prairie provinces."

Studying human behaviour

One of the many interesting projects that IRC is currently working on is "Human Factors in Fire." Researchers are investigating how humans respond to fire alarm signals and how they act during fire evacuations, including decision time and speed of movement during evacuations.

Other important aspects of this project include studying typical actions of the building occupants and their social interaction during a fire. NRC's software FIRECAM and FIERAsystem include sub-models for the response and evacuation process of occupants in buildings, based on extensive research of human behaviour during fire drills and actual fires. The research findings are used in developing and improving building and fire codes, improving public education and training and supporting fire protection activities.

For more information about this project, contact Dr. Noureddine Bénichou by e-mail at benichou.noureddine@nrc.ca

Fire resistant construction

Fire Resistant Construction develops systems that can provide passive fire protection such as technologies for compartmentation and structural fire resistance for light- and heavy-weight construction.


Recently, a study was done on the fire-resistance and sound proofing of gypsum board walls and floors. The results of this and other studies will provide builders with greater choice between materials permitted by the Canadian Building and Fire Codes.

Fire risk assessment

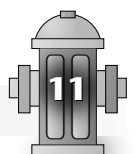
Fire Risk Assessment develops computer models and tools to assist industry and regulators in assessing fire risk.

The creation of the fire risk assessment tools FIRECAM™ and FIERAsystems is enabling builders to make better fire protection choices. Based on research, these computer models simulate fire growth, spread, smoke movement, occupant response and evacuation, and fire department response and effectiveness.

In cooperation with the Ottawa Fire Department, IRC has begun to research the benefits of fans venting smoke from stairwells during firefighting activities in high-rise apartments. This study will enable the Ottawa Fire Department to develop safe and effective procedures for the use of positive pressure ventilation.

IRC aims to reduce the negative impact of fire on the Canadian economy and quality of life. Among other things, IRC research results are being used in the development of the National Building and Fire Codes of Canada, which are published by NRC. 

For more information contact Russ Thomas, Director, Fire Risk Management Program at (613) 993-2204 or access the web site at www.nrc.ca/irc/frm



Changes in reporting fire statistics

The Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners, at their annual meeting held July 14 to 20, 2001, approved a new coding manual for fire incident reporting. This manual will provide the standard for fire reporting across Canada. Individual provincial and territorial fire marshals and fire commissioners are expected to adopt and implement the new coding manual within their jurisdictions.

The publication titled *Canadian Code Structure on Fire Loss Statistics, 2002 Edition* took approximately three years to develop. The last time it was revised was in 1979. A sub-committee chaired by Northwest Territories Fire Marshal Don Gillis consisted of Eugene Marotta, Occupational Health & Safety and Fire Prevention, Ottawa; Dr. George Hadjisophocleus, National Research Council, Ottawa; Lieutenant Colonel Sean Tracey, Department of National Defence, Ottawa; Robin Stanners, Fire Commissioner's Office, British Columbia; and Tom Makey, former Fire Commissioner of Alberta. Gloria Mercer and Mahendra Wijayasinghe at the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office provided the document preparation, editing and formatting as well as technical input.

The following Q & A with Tom Makey provides an understanding of the new coding structure.

Q. What is the purpose of the Canadian Coding Structure?

A. The purpose of the Canadian Coding Structure (CCS) is to provide a uniform and standardized format for reporting fire incidents in all jurisdictions in Canada. The CCS contains a common set of definitions for reporting incident and other fire protection data. Prior to the existence of the CCS, only very limited fire loss data was collected and manually recorded and analyzed. In 1963, the Association of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners worked with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs to gain consensus to move ahead with the development of the coding manual, generic reports, etcetera. It was prepared over the next several years. The coding structure was deliberately designed so the codes could be computer analyzed. By that time, the Alberta Government had considerable main-frame computer capability and Alberta began storing the data and analyzing it with the assistance of computer staff.

Q. Why was it necessary to develop the new Canadian structure for fire loss statistics?

A. It is more a matter of revising the existing manual to address the current needs. Alberta adopted the original manual in 1970 and implemented it in 1971. In 1979, several other updates were made to the Alberta manual to address local conditions and to implement the changes made to the national document.

Q. What are some key changes in the new version compared to the previous version?

A. None of the changes are very drastic. The major change is with the number of digits used in some fields. For example, in "Property Class" it was desired to have more code numbers available for greater definition of the property involved. It now has provision for four-digit codes instead of three digits. The same is true of "Source of Ignition," which changes from two- to three-digit codes. These are not big changes but they do allow better definition and aid in research. In addition, some changes reflect technological advances within the fire protection and model code disciplines.

Alberta's perspective: a Fire Statistics Reporting Manual

According to Fire Commissioner Pat Graham, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office is planning to release the new Alberta manual in June 2002. Implementing the new manual requires making revisions to fire incident reports to suit the new coding structure and providing training sessions for fire department personnel about the new reporting features. In addition, the computerized database of the Fire Statistics Information System will also be updated to accept and validate the new codes. A transition period during which the old reporting system will be replaced with the new system is also being planned. "Our plan is to make this transition as smooth and seamless as possible," said Graham.



Q. What other changes have happened in the area of Canadian fire statistics?

A. One of the big changes has been the move from a main-frame computer to desk-top computers. This allows ready access to the data and also gives immense analytical capability in a very short time. What used to take days is now often done in minutes or even seconds. The additional definition provided by the revised coding makes it a much more valuable tool.

Q. What was the response from all the provinces regarding the new Canadian Coding Structure publications?

A. It had been quite a while since the last major review and most were looking forward to providing their input into the revised edition.

Q. What's the next step? Will it be implemented in all the provinces and territories?

A. The members of the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners have gone on record that it is the intent of the jurisdictions to have the new coding structure in place for the 2002 calendar year.

Each province and territory will have to add their municipal directory which identifies individual municipalities and consider how much fire loss value data to include in their system. The base level for financial information is very low and most may want to exceed that level. They will also need to distribute their own copies of the coding manual and reporting forms to fire departments, insurance adjusters and anyone else that is required to report.

In Alberta, that distribution will include safety codes officers in the fire discipline. Those using plain paper reporting procedures or reporting electronically will also need to make some adjustments to their systems to reflect the new changes.

The next important development should be a more comprehensive Canadian Fire Loss Report. Presently, the *Fire Losses in Canada* annual report from Human Resources Development Canada contains an outline of Canadian fire loss data that is inadequate and rather limited. With the cooperation of all the provinces and territories, a better and more comprehensive national report needs to be produced annually. 🔥

Expert advice from our two Rays

You were asking...

Q. I attempted to fuel my recreation vehicle at a gas station recently and the attendant would not activate the pump and **instructed me to use one of the outer dispensers.** I did not have a chance to question her further because she was very busy. Why did she make me move my vehicle to another dispenser?

A. Some gas stations require larger vehicles such as RVs, trucks and vans to use the outer aisles at their facilities. This is to ensure that the attendant's view is not restricted by these vehicles. The Alberta Fire Code 1997 requires attendants to have an unobstructed view of every dispenser at the same time.

Q. I live in a high-rise apartment and am concerned that the **fire alarm cannot be heard in the bedroom.** It is barely audible in the other rooms even when I am awake. Shouldn't the fire alarm be loud enough to awaken a sleeping person? What can I do to correct this situation?

A. If you are concerned about not hearing the fire alarm system signal within your suite, you should contact the building owner and discuss having the audibility level tested. The building owner should confirm if the fire alarm system is operating in accordance with the original building design standards. If the building owner is not willing to cooperate, you may elect to file a complaint with the local fire department as a method of prompting action. 🔥



Ray Cox, Edmonton and Ray Ligenza, Calgary

These questions and answers were prepared by Ray Cox (780) 415-0508, Edmonton, and Ray Ligenza (403) 297-5797, Calgary. Both Cox and Ligenza are Technical Advisors for Technical Services, Building and Fire Safety, in the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs.

2001 Fire Prevention Week summary

This year's theme: *Cover the Bases & Strike Out Fire*, which combined baseball and fire safety, was promoted throughout Alberta with the assistance of Alberta Municipal Affairs Communications Branch, by partnering with municipal fire departments, the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association, First Nations newspapers, radio and TV.

The campaign focused on three leading causes of home fires in North America, including Alberta. It broke down the multiple home fire safety message in a fun and easy-to-understand baseball format by placing cooking-related fire safety at first base, heating at second, electrical at third and smoke alarms/fire escape planning at home plate. The campaign encouraged children and their families to cover the bases of home fire safety so that they can strike out the risk of many home fires to increase safety. Thanks to all the fire departments that put on activities during Fire Prevention Week.

Fire Commissioner's office activities during the week

Fire Prevention Week campaign kits

Three kits were distributed to fire departments:

- The Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) kit, which presented Alberta fire statistics and the theme from an Alberta perspective
- The Fire Prevention Canada kit, which presented a Canadian perspective
- The National Fire Protection Association kit, which elaborated on the theme and provided a number of useful angles to promote Fire Prevention Week

Fire safety publications

Approximately 30,000 pamphlets, booklets and cards on various fire prevention and safety topics were distributed to the public through the municipal fire departments. In addition, requests for Sparky costumes, the fire hydrant robot and the fire safety display units were handled by the FCO.

Radio

Twelve radio stations located throughout the province participated by running a fire-safety quiz designed by the FCO and awarded fire extinguisher or smoke alarm prizes (provided by the FCO) to callers who gave the correct answers. The FCO also provided a series of public service announcements for radio stations to use.

The participating radio stations were:

- CFRV FM in Lethbridge
- 1080 CKSA in Lloydminster
- 1210 KWA in Slave Lake
- EZ Rock 104.9 in Edmonton
- CKGY 95.5 FM in Red Deer
- 1310 CHLW in St. Paul
- CJAY 92/AM 1060 CKMX in Calgary
- 1340 CJCM in Cold Lake
- CKER 101.9 FM in Edmonton
- CKSQ in Stettler
- CKKX-FM/CKYL in Peace River




A paid announcement was broadcast on 17 FM stations and one AM station by the FCO. The message was broadcast on five days between 6 and 11 a.m. from October 8-12.

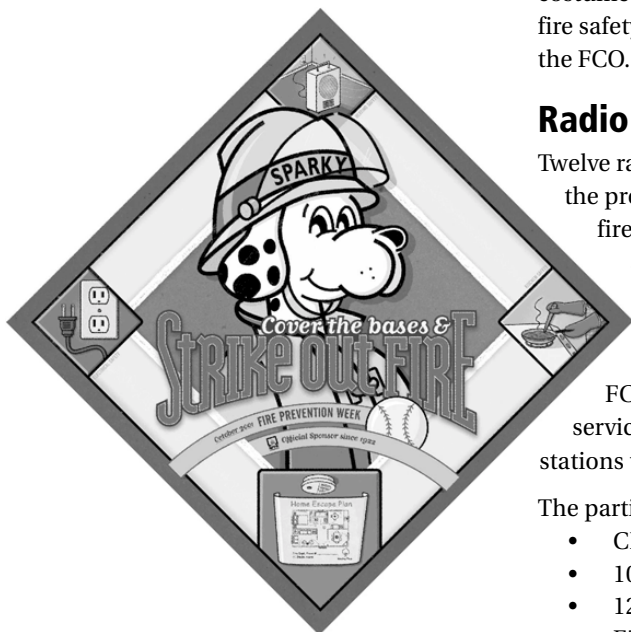
Television

ACCESS TV broadcasted the Family Fire Safety Video, provided by Michael Grant, President, World Trends Inc. of Unionville, Ontario. The broadcast was made possible with the cooperation of Alberta Learning.

On Wednesday, October 9th, Assistant Fire Commissioner Wayne Girven and Captain Tim Vandenbrink of the Edmonton Emergency Response Department participated in the A-Channel Big Breakfast show in Edmonton to promote Fire Prevention Week.

McDonald's Fire Prevention Week campaign

The FCO implemented a child fire prevention/safety education program (grades K-3) with corporate support from McDonald's Restaurants of Canada in 76 Alberta municipalities during Fire Prevention Week. Approximately 163,000 worksheets were distributed to children through elementary schools. The worksheet was designed with the guidance of the provincial Fire Commissioner's Offices in B.C., Alberta and Manitoba. Participating children were eligible for prizes offered by local McDonald's outlets and the main awards—Fire Chief for a Day and a chance to win a trip for four to Disney World, Florida. 



Digest

Staff changes at Safety Codes Council

Brian Alford joined the SCC as the new Administrator of Certification and Manager of Training. Brian's experience in a variety of post secondary education roles and his experience facilitating numerous workshops will prove beneficial in his new position.

Keith Metcalfe, the SCC's Executive Director, resigned as of the end of October 2001. Before deciding what he wants to do next, Metcalfe says he's taking some time off to relax and travel. Replacing Keith is **Don Barrett**. Barrett was previously with the Alzheimer's Society of Edmonton and joined the Safety Codes Council as its new Executive Director on November 26, 2001.

New fire chief for Edmonton

Former Edmontonian Randy Wolsey has returned to Edmonton as Fire Chief of the City of Edmonton Emergency Response Department. Wolsey started work as a firefighter in 1972 in Delta, British Columbia, and rose to the position of Director of Fire and Emergency Services. He was also Delta's fire chief and emergency plan coordinator.

New firehall for Fairview a real possibility

The Municipal District of Fairview council says it supports building a new fire hall once the location and size have been decided.

New videos available

The Detector Protectors

This 15-minute video shows a group of adventurous kids who take fire safety seriously—hot on the trail of smoke alarm violators! Through the use of clever gadgets and gizmos, young viewers see how smoke alarms work, their proper installation and maintenance, and what to do if the alarm sounds. This video shows why smoke alarms and a family fire safety plan are so important for saving lives.

Firefighters & Fire Safety for Kids

See firefighters in action in this 15-minute video. Actual footage teaches kids the importance of teamwork and fire safety. The video highlights the crucial role of firefighters and rescue personnel. Fire safety techniques include: installing smoke alarms, planning two emergency exits, calling 911 and other procedures.

Fire Prevention and Safety

This 15-minute video shows employees how to prevent fires and what to do in case of fire. The video covers:

- common causes of workplace fires;
- the importance of good housekeeping and other fire prevention measures;
- types of fire extinguishers;
- how to use fire extinguishers; and
- evacuation of buildings in case of fire.

Fire Safe: The Right Combination

This 12-minute video shows scenarios of fires in various hospital departments to help reinforce effective emergency responses. It demonstrates one and two person techniques for carrying patients from danger. The video also covers preventing, containing, reporting, and extinguishing fires.

Fire Alarm: Your Trained Response

Learn to make quick, correct, lifesaving decisions in dangerous situations in this 17-minute video that includes the initial reporting of a fire; extinguishing and containing fires; evacuating patients; and more. Illustrated with on-the job examples.

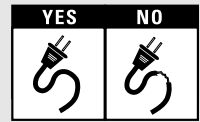
Watch What You Heat: Prevent Home Fires

In a 15-minute video, witness dramatic examples of different fire hazards in the home, then see simple preventive measures anyone can follow. The program features animated graphics and live segments in four areas: electrical, heating, flammables, and roofing, and shows fire hazards associated with each area. The video can be shown in its entirety or in individual segments suitable for age 16 to adult.

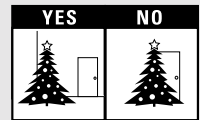
The night before Christmas for firefighters

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse,
When down through the chimney all covered with soot,
Came the SPIRIT OF FIRE, an ugly galoot.

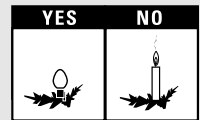
His eyes glowed like embers, his features were stern,
As he looked all around for something to burn.
What he saw made him grumble, his anger grew higher,
For there wasn't a thing that would start a good fire.



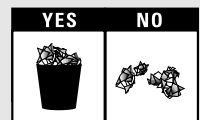
No door had been blocked by the big Christmas tree,
It stood in the corner leaving passage-ways free,
The lights that glowed brightly for Betty and Jim,
Had been hung with precaution so none touched a limb.



All the wiring was new, not a break could be seen,
And water at its base kept the tree nice and green,
The tree had been trimmed by a mother insistent,
That the ornaments used, must be fire-resistant.



And would you believe it, right next to the tree,
Was a suitable box for holding debris;
A place to throw wrappings of paper and string,
From all of the gifts that Santa might bring.



The ugly galoot was so mad he near bust,
As he climbed up the chimney in utter disgust,
For the folks in this home had paid close attention,
To all the rules of good FIRE PREVENTION.



The Mystery of Home Hot Spots


In this 15-minute video, Red the fire dog and his friend Lucy tell the story of how they solved the problem of the hot spots. Loveable puppets, colourful graphics, and original music help create a fun-filled adventure for children ages 6-11. The video shows young children the common fire and burn hazards in and around their homes. It encourages kids to take an active role in helping their parents conduct a home inspection and teaches that fire prevention is the responsibility of every person regardless of age.

Through the Eyes of Child: Burn Recovery

Activities that teach trust, confidence and willpower to severely burned children at a summer camp form the background to this 15-minute video. The program presents case histories and the lingering effects of burn injuries through interviews with children, physicians, nurses and counsellors. The video

has been produced by the Children's Hospital Burn Centre, Denver, Colorado and the International Association of Firefighters Burn Foundation.

Just a Firecracker

Burn injuries and disfigurement sustained by children from firecrackers and other types of fireworks are graphically portrayed in this 8-minute video. The severity of burn injuries in the eyes of physicians, nurses and parents together with a brief discussion of the science behind fireworks provides for a high impact and realistic lesson to all who contemplate the use of these dangerous pyrotechnic devices. The video program has been produced by Crime Prevention Association and Professional Firefighters Association with the RCMP, the federal Solicitor General and the B.C. Solicitor General. 

Holiday fire safety campaign

Alberta Fire News is published three times a year, by the Fire Commissioner's Office of Alberta Municipal Affairs, for the information of the fire service and others with an interest in fire protection.

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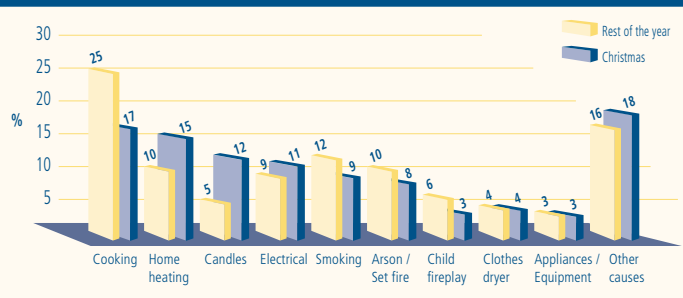
Karen Sigurdson
Public Affairs Officer

The December/January holiday season is a happy and joyous occasion for many. Christmas, Hanukkah, Ukrainian holidays and other festivities bring people together to join in celebration. However, the combination of sub-zero temperatures, short day-lengths and the holiday season, all add up to a higher fire risk in our homes.

By looking at the fire statistics collected by the Fire Commissioner's Office, we see that indeed the fire risk is high during the "Christmas" period from December 15 to December 31, when compared with the rest of the year. These two periods are compared in the table below.

There was only one reported fire related to Christmas trees—one in a natural tree caused by an accident with a candle.

Causes of home fires in Alberta during Christmas and the rest of the year, 1996-2000



Home fire losses: Christmas period vs. rest of the year Alberta (1996-2000)				
Time period	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	Property loss (\$)
Christmas (Dec. 15 - Dec. 31)	511	8	84	\$17,883,560
17-day period in rest of the year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 14)	369	5	56	\$11,101,492

Since only 17 days are included in the Christmas period compared to 348 days in the rest of the year, the numbers in the table were calculated to compare the Christmas period with a typical 17-day period during the rest of the year to make a more meaningful comparison.

These calculations indicate that all four fire-loss measures increased during the Christmas period:

- fires (up by 39 per cent)
- fire deaths (up by 60 per cent);
- fire injuries (up by 50 per cent); and
- property losses (up by 61 per cent).

The accompanying bar chart shows that the major causes of home fires are similar during the Christmas season when compared to the rest of the year. The exceptions were fires related to candles (up by 140 per cent!), home heating (up by 50 per cent) and electrical sources (up by 22 per cent).

The eight fire deaths during the Christmas seasons in 1996 to 2000 were all adults (six men and two women) who died in separate fires. The causes of four of these fatal fires were unknown. Two fire deaths were

from careless smoking that ignited upholstered furniture or clothing, one from an electrical short circuit igniting structural materials in a mobile home, and one from the ignition of gasoline. The 84 injuries were sustained

primarily in fires related to cooking, smoking, home heating, electrical, lighters/matches, candles, flammable/com-bustible liquid vapours catching fire, and children playing with fire.

We must remind ourselves that although home fire causes are similar during the holidays and the rest of the year, some fire causes definitely increase during the Christmas period. They are fires related to candles, home-heating and electrical fires. The hectic schedules during this time can overshadow the need to be safe, and shortcuts may be taken or activities done in a hurry, which may compromise safety. Proper planning and keeping safety a priority are essential for a fire-safe holiday season. Albertans are reminded to ensure they have working smoke alarms and a well-rehearsed home fire escape plan in case a fire breaks out in their homes. 