

Calgary Fire Department's Wellness Centre

Making a difference in the health of firefighters

A new, state-of-the-art wellness facility is making a difference in the lives of Calgary firefighters. The Calgary Fire Department Wellness Centre opened in February 2005 to provide a comprehensive approach to health and fitness.

The Calgary Fire Department had a wellness initiative in place for five years, which enabled the fire department to contract out the medical services. However, declining participation led the department to conduct a Wellness Initiative survey.

"Through the survey, we realized that firefighters needed to be able to integrate the medicals into regular on-duty shifts," said Calgary Fire Department Wellness Fitness officer Ian Crosby. "Working with our union president and our fire chief, we started making plans for our own medical clinic, dedicated to the needs of firefighters."

Crosby says the biggest support came from former Fire Chief Wayne Morris, and union president Scott Wilcox. Morris was instrumental in opening the centre, which is located in a previously vacant fire hall, prior to his retirement this past spring.

"The end result is a clinic that is tailored to the specific needs of firefighters, including pre-screening for seven forms of work related cancer listed in the *Alberta Workmen's Compensation Act-201/2003*," said Crosby.

The Wellness Centre includes a full-time occupational doctor and occupational nurse, as well as two kinesiologists for fitness training. With the staff's primary focus on occupational needs of firefighters, they are able to understand and interpret test results in ways that family physicians are not trained to, as well as take the time to discuss the details with each firefighter on a one-on-one basis.

The centre is organized into four sections:

- Physician (physical examination and review of health history and lab results including heavy metal screening, x-rays.)
- Occupational Nurse (sound booth, lung capacity, vision including depth perception, colour blindness, vital signs, anthropometric measurements.)

continued on next page »



Kinesiologist Darren Gardiner tests a firefighter for cardiovascular fitness (VO2 max and 12 lead – stress test).

In this issue

Making a difference in the health of firefighters 1

Changing the way of doing business..... 3

Alberta Fire Chief's Association update..... 4

Educational opportunities for the fire service 4

Emergency Management Alberta update 5

Leading edge preparedness reputation..... 5

Bringing Fire Prevention Week to a close..... 6

Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network of Alberta .. 7

Assessing the Risk 8

fire etc. update..... 9

Aboriginal news update 10

Fire departments and flood survival 12

Innovation Program funding provided to FCO 14

Successful Muscular Dystrophy fundraising tradition continues..... 15

Creating firefighters at an early age..... 15

Fire Electronic Reporting System update 16

Provincial fire commissioners working together..... 16

Partners make progress on transportation issues..... 17

Don't miss out 17

A strategy for injury prevention 18

Putting the spotlight on... Nadine Elcock 18

Q&A's about Alberta's Safety Codes 19

Launching the December holiday campaign..... 20

Digest..... 21

Exploring the military's approach to firefighting..... 22



Students from the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement got a first hand look at some firefighting equipment, including trucks, as part of 2005's Fire Prevention Week launch activities on October 11, 2005 in Edmonton – see page 8 for more about **Fire Prevention Week 2005.**

- Metabolic testing (treadmill, heart – 12 lead ECG, cardiovascular – VO2 Max)
- Fitness testing (muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility and body composition)

“One of the unique aspects of this centre is the time given to each firefighter,” said Crosby. “In addition to explaining why tests are taken, the staff also interpret the results achieved for each firefighter.”

Like most other fire departments, it is mandatory for all Calgary firefighters to report for a physical each year. However, it is not mandatory that they complete all aspects of the test. Through the wellness centre, over 98 per cent of Calgary’s firefighters who have had their physical have voluntarily done every component of the test.

“We have demonstrated that, with proper education and available on-shift time, the program can sell itself,” said Crosby. “It’s about promoting positive lifestyle changes coupled with early detection techniques that can positively impact the health of our members.”

Another key benefit of the centre is its ability to establish baselines and determine changes to those baselines. “The initial medicals of our firefighters helped us to establish baseline data on various health aspects,” said Crosby. “By first establishing a baseline and then by conducting ongoing medicals over the years, it will enable us to establish trends. This is critical and will go a long way in terms of providing our members with protection like WCB coverage.”

In addition to conducting comprehensive medicals for firefighters, the centre also serves as the starting point for many potential firefighters. “All of our candidates go to the wellness centre to see if their fitness level meets the requirements for a firefighter,” said Crosby. “They can find out right away whether they are ready or if they need to improve in certain areas. As well, we’re working towards integrating the centre for retired members, which will expand the centre full circle.”

“Everything is tied back to the fire service,” he said. “We strive to ensure that firefighters realize the relevance between being healthy and doing well on the job.”

“We are also fortunate that our new Fire Chief Bruce Burrell is a strong advocate of this program,” added Crosby. “The true potential of this program is enormous. It’s one thing to start it and quit, and another to sustain it. Thankfully, Chief Burrell recognizes its potential.”

The centre has already started to attract attention from other emergency service organizations. Other fire departments and some police departments in southern Alberta have started using the centre for their members. There has been great interest from several fire departments across Canada.

“So far, representatives from Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton and Edmonton have toured the facility and they’ve all been really impressed,” said Crosby.



Dr. Tony Lynch reviews a firefighter patient’s health history.

Crosby says that, despite being open for less than a year, the Wellness Centre has already paid off in many ways.

“It’s a unique program illustrating that the department and the city are committed to firefighters’ health and wellness. Providing the dollars to create and maintain the centre clearly shows members that they are recognized as the department’s most valued asset, which has resulted in

increased morale among members. It’s also been beneficial in terms of educating firefighters about the importance of being healthy. In fact, the early detection provided through the tests truly is life saving. I know that there have been several cases already where early detection has enabled firefighters to catch illnesses at an early stage, which astronomically increases their chances of success. That alone is worth it!” 🔥



Occupational Nurse Kimberley Leith assesses a firefighter in audiosound booth for hearing.

For more information about the Calgary Fire Department Wellness Centre, please contact Ian Crosby at (403) 287-4231.

Changing the way of doing business

Over the past several months, the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) has continued to work on furthering the close working relationship between the operations group and fire departments across Alberta. For example:

- Kevan Jess and the fire chiefs of Southern Alberta organized a successful Southern Alberta Firefighter's Conference that was held in Lethbridge on November 19 and 20, 2005.
- Ken McMullen and Frank Harris worked closely with Airdrie fire officials investigating the cause and origin of a fire that destroyed a townhouse development in August.
- Ross Bennett held several meetings to share experiences on regional

co-operation and the co-ordination of fire services. One meeting, held in Peace River, attracted interest throughout northwest Alberta. It featured Greg Gramiak relating his experiences in the MD of Lesser Slave River.

- Tom O'Gorman continued to work with various regional groups, including the Central Alberta Fire Training Association and the Parkland Regional Fire Chiefs Association.



Another priority of the FCO is continuing of updates to AERIS to better reflect requests for information by the fire service and our interprovincial mutual

aid partners. Updates include changing terminology to reflect the Incident Command System, the inclusion of key resources that were missed in the original planning and the addition of a "Readiness" section that will

give a listing of immediately available resources for out-of-jurisdiction responses.

The Operations section began conducting a 'current state' survey in early December, which includes a complete update of the AERIS system and a secondary list of questions

to round it out. The survey will assist the Fire Services Advisory Committee's working committee by providing a complete picture of the current status of the fire service.

As well, the FCO will be involved in communicating the outputs of the Occupational Health and Safety committee this winter. A Code of Practice for Firefighters has been developed, which provides an interpretation of how the Alberta Occupation Health and Safety Code applies to fire department emergency operations. The document is in the early phases of being shared with the fire service. For more information about this document, please contact the FCO.

Also available on the FCO website are new templates for warrants, voluntary consent to search and seize and release of responsibility. Please note that these are automated forms requiring activation of "Macros" on your computer. These templates will ensure that when a safety codes officer requires a warrant that he or she is using a form acceptable to Alberta Justice. 🔥

Message from the Fire Commissioner

2005 has been a very busy, exciting and productive year for the FCO and the Alberta Fire Services. The protection of Alberta's citizens is of prime importance to the fire service and this level of priority and importance is shared by Safety Services and Municipal Affairs.

Given the changes and shifts in the social fabric and industry, as well as the continued growth throughout the province, the challenges faced by responders has started to outstrip the ability of providers to keep pace.

At this time it is necessary that the providers of protection clearly detail their strengths and weaknesses and begin the collective process of ensuring that the provision of service is based upon sound data gained thorough risk analysis. Such an analysis will identify who and what requires the necessary level of protection.

In 2003, the Minister appointed the Fire Service Advisory Committee (FSAC) to begin the difficult process of focusing on the current and future activities of the fire service in Alberta. The committee is currently working in partnership with stake-holders and the Fire Service in general to fulfill this task.

As Fire Commissioner, I am delighted to witness the level of co-operation and collaboration being exhibited by all involved in the provision of protective service. I am also excited by the growing reference to expansion of activities aimed at and reducing and preventing death, injury and property damage in fire and non-fire related incidents.

J (Pat) Graham
Fire Commissioner



For more information about any of these topics, please contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392 (dial 310-0000 – toll-free access outside of Edmonton), or visit the website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm.



Encouraging participation from all



The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) continues to work on behalf of its members on a variety of issues and projects. Chiefs who are not members are urged to join and lend your support and add your voice through attendance at Regional Meetings, the annual conference and annual general meeting. There are many small but very important fire departments in Alberta, and their participation is encouraged to ensure all provincial fire departments receive support from the association.

AFCA has been effective throughout the discussions with the Transportation Safety Committee, which have resulted in numerous changes in the approach to implementation of the regulation governing Commercial Vehicles. The association will also play a part in providing information to members to make local implementation easier to accomplish and enhance safety for all involved.

The Electrical Safety Training Program has been running successfully for two years and arrangements are being made to continue to offer the training for those who have not already taken it or who are new entries to the emergency services. The electrical industry has

been very supportive of this initiative and the association in general. This is a partnership that needs to be further strengthened.

As 2005 comes to a close, we are reminded that the last half of December is a very dangerous time in the homes of Albertans and other Canadians. The number of fire incidents rise markedly during this time, which increases the danger of injury or death from unwanted fires. We are also reminded that these fires are predictable and preventable. We can expect fires caused by cooking, children playing with matches or lighters and careless use of smokers' materials. Even the seemingly innocent candle often causes fires.

Fire loss statistics have shown that there is a need for this information to be passed on to the residents of small and rural communities, as rural areas are at greater risk of fires and help is often much further away. Despite this greater risk, fewer rural people have working smoke alarms in their homes. Members of your fire departments are the experts within your respective communities, with knowledge of issues such as the proper installation and maintenance of smoke alarms and how to perform a home fire drill. The AFCA encourages all fire departments

to send their fire safety experts into the community to teach fire prevention and fire safety.

The Board of Directors encourages you to begin planning to attend the upcoming Annual Conference in Red Deer on June 18-21, 2006 at the Capri Hotel and Conference Centre. The 2007 Conference will be held in Edmonton at the Mayfield Inn and Conference Centre on June 10-13, 2007.

The AFCA would also remind all members that your bookstore is working hard to provide the best service possible at the best prices "Profits" from sales help support the association and its counterparts in other provinces. The AFCA and members of the Fire Chiefs Associations of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba receive a 10 per cent discount. In the meantime, attend the AFCA Regional Meetings and make your voice heard. Information about upcoming regional Meetings is available through your regional director. 🔥

For more information about the AFCA, visit the website at www.afca.ab.ca.

Fire Services Training Initiative in Alberta

Educational opportunities for the fire service

There are a multitude of opportunities for firefighter education in Alberta. Many of these centre around courses offered in municipal firehalls across the province through outreach and client-hosted programs.

Through the Fire Services Training Initiative, the Fire Commissioner's Office provides funding to regional training initiatives across the province. There are 27 sites helping to co-ordinate the funded training to all fire departments in Alberta, both volunteer and career.

The courses offered by these sites include a wide range of certification levels dealing with almost every facet of firefighting and leadership required by fire service professionals. The real strength of the program is the integration of the funded programs into locally-funded training so that the identified training needs of the region are met.

The 2005/2006 forms are already in the training centres and a complete listing of these sites and the approved courses will be published early in 2006. 🔥

For a listing of the sites in your area or for more detailed information on the Training Initiative, please contact your regional Fire Safety Officer:
Kevan Jess – Lethbridge: (403) 381-5483
Ken McMullen – Calgary: (403) 287-4246
Frank Harris – Eastern Alberta: (403) 340-4987
Tom O'Gorman – Red Deer: (403) 340-5162
Ross Bennett – Peace River: (780) 624-6303

For information in the Edmonton-Northeast Alberta area contact Ernie Polsom at (780) 415-0549.





Innovative project secures Alberta's leading edge preparedness reputation

Emergency Management Alberta (EMA) is looking to the web to enhance its response capabilities.

In partnership with Telus, and with funding from the Government of Alberta's Innovation Program, EMA is developing an integrated, secure, web-based solution for sharing information between agencies and jurisdictions in both the private and public sectors, known as the Emergency Management Operating System (EMOS).

The system will support emergency management from the first responder to the municipal, provincial, and federal orders of government through mitigation, preparation, response and recovery. It will also enable decision makers at all levels to make better decisions faster.

"Ultimately, the EMOS will allow all stakeholders in the EMOS initiative to realize significant gains in functionality, analysis and interconnectivity with other organizations," said Dave Redman, retired Executive Director of Emergency Management Alberta. "Many of the core EMOS components exist today and will be supplemented and enhanced as part of the current project. Added capabilities will be developed to provide specific tools for meeting communication and collaboration needs in the future."

Stakeholders in the project range from industrial facility owners to first responders, municipalities, selected special interest groups and non-governmental supporting agencies. These emergency management professionals and trained stakeholders will have access to a common Information Technology enabler that is restricted to users that

EMOS at a glance

The key elements of the EMOS include:

- enabling key authorities to make better decisions faster
- developing an affordable system that is attractive to all users
- providing modular capability for flexibility in approved functions
- ensuring a secure, web-based system that is integrated to enable information sharing between multiple users throughout the province.
- creating a comprehensive system for planning routine or special activities beyond the realm of Emergency Management response

The project includes five key components:

- Incident management
- Geographic information system (GIS)
- Emergency notification system (ENS)
- Emergency management information system
- Additional data layers/tools

The EMOS project will develop a unified emergency management approach and solution utilizing existing and new technology to

address the needs across multiple agencies and jurisdictions. The operating system will create a common, standardized and complete solution, which will enable stakeholders to plan, train for and deliver the best response and safest outcomes in an emergency situation. The EMOS is an affordable provincial, multiple agency/jurisdiction solution which enables economies of scale so that smaller, less financially-equipped stakeholders can take advantage of the solution.

have passed security checks. The EMOS website will provide authorized users with access to online e-learning. This low cost alternative to hands-on learning assures that knowledgeable use of the system is available to the subscribed users.

"Emergency Management Alberta's collaborative vision for the EMOS integrates the emergency management framework (from first responder through municipal, provincial and federal orders of government, including the private sector) as the standard service for Emergency Operation Centres," said Redman. "Fundamentally, the goal is to provide all responding organizations with effective tools for responding faster and more effectively to all emergencies. Part of the vision involves enabling technologies; however, interagency communications and collaboration is at the heart of the vision. By integrating the stakeholder datasets, processes and methodologies onto a common platform, decision making and critical responsiveness will be enhanced, providing for more positive results."

Redman adds that Alberta is recognized both nationally and internationally as a leader in Emergency Management innovation and the EMOS project is yet one more component of that leadership.

"The intent is to make Alberta the safest and most secure province in Canada and to ensure that EMA remains proactive in the face of evolving natural and man-made threats."

Two pilots are currently planned within the EMOS program: the first being with the Sundre Petroleum Operators Group (SPOG) and, the second with Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response (NRCAER). Both of these pilots will enable input and testing by a diverse and cross-jurisdictional group of participants in rural and urban environments.

The project will be completed in four stages. The commercial launch of the EMOS in stage four is expected for April 2007 and onward. 🔥

For more information about the EMOS, please contact Colin Blair at (780) 422-9000 (outside of Edmonton call toll free at 310-0000) or email ema@gov.ab.ca



Bringing Fire Prevention Week to a close

During October 9-15, 2005, communities across Alberta received an important fire safety message: "Use candles with care: When you go out, blow out!" This message was proclaimed as the theme of Fire Prevention Week 2005. Fire Prevention Week is held annually during October to remind and encourage fire and injury prevention organizations to promote fire prevention and safety in their communities.



President of ATCO Gas Jerome Engler speaks during the Fire Prevention Week kick off in Edmonton. ATCO Gas was a major sponsor of this year's activities.

This year's Fire Prevention Week message was an alert to the general public. It conveyed the reality that candle fires are a serious part of the fire problem in Alberta and that consumers need to increase the precautions they take with candle purchases and usage.

Albertans heard the message!

Fire prevention and injury prevention organizations across the province delivered candle fire safety messages to heighten public awareness of candle fire prevention and safety. The fire service offered safety activities and events such as open houses, safety fairs, media advertising, fire safety displays, contests, fire drills, school presentations and smoke alarm give-aways. As well, the Fire Commissioner's Office delivered the following:

- FREE Fire Prevention Week campaign kits for the fire service, media, and public, all containing ready to use support materials;
- A FREE children's Fire Prevention Week program for the fire service, including fire safety activity booklets for local school children aged K-3, a Fire Chief for a Day contest, and a Grand Prize contest to win a computer. This program was sponsored by ATCO Gas and Electric and utilized by 296 Alberta fire departments to reach approximately 165,000 children;

- A candle fire safety advertisement in member papers of the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association;
- A candle fire safety Public Service Announcement on CKUA (a province-wide radio station);
- A Fire Prevention Week coverage contest for members of the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association; and
- A provincial media kick-off event, in partnership with the Edmonton Fire Department, held at Edmonton City Hall on October 11, 2005.

The panel of speakers included Master of Ceremonies, Captain Inspector Rusty Foerger; Municipal Affairs Minister Rob Renner; Edmonton Deputy Mayor Linda Sloan; Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham; Edmonton Fire Chief Randy Wolsey; and President of ATCO Gas Jerome Engler. Events included a children's obstacle course, fire truck tour, and activity booths, which were participated in by school children of

the Buffalo and Fishing Lake Métis Settlements. Events were also held by Edmonton Fire Department, Strathcona County Fire Department, St. Albert Fire Department, Wetaskiwin Fire Department, Cochrane Fire Department, the Alberta Burn Rehabilitation Society and volunteers from Alberta Municipal Affairs. Thanks are also extended to CGI for their donation of \$1,000 to support the Fire Prevention Week kick-off.

In response to the encouraging participation in the campaign, Fire Commissioner Pat Graham said, "I would like to thank participating fire and injury prevention organizations for their enthusiastic participation in this important fire prevention event. The purpose of the fire and injury prevention services is to save lives and property. Prevention is a primary means of achieving this goal." While participation in Fire Prevention Week is positive, more needs to be done. In order to effectively reduce the number of fires, deaths, and injuries, fire prevention needs to be promoted all year round. 🔥



The event also included an obstacle course and information booths set up by the Edmonton Fire Department, Strathcona County Fire Department, St. Albert Fire Department, Wetaskiwin Fire Department, Cochrane Fire Department, and the Alberta Burn Rehabilitation Society.

Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network of Alberta

The May 2005 issue of *Alberta Fire News* introduced the launch of the Fire & Life Safety Educators' Network of Alberta. This update provides some key advances in this network since its formation in April.

Two leading agencies

It was decided that the network be co-ordinated by two agencies – the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) and the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR). This arrangement takes advantage of the connections ACICR has with injury prevention networks in Alberta and avoids co-ordination of the many stakeholders involved in the injury prevention field, which was considered too ambitious and unmanageable.

Change of name

The two words "Life Safety" in the original name for the network were replaced by "Injury Prevention" to reflect the intent of the network. The definitions section in the "Background" document posted under the Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network on the FCO website (www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm) provides further background on this change.

Advisory committee

The advisory committee was established on April 13, 2005 and includes representatives from Alberta Education, Alberta Health & Wellness, Alberta Seniors & Community Supports, Alberta Human Resources & Employment, Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development, Alberta Community Development (Facilitation), Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Safety Codes Council, Health Canada

(Product Safety Program), Alberta Ambulance Operators Association, Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties. In addition, FCO staff members also attended this meeting. The "Terms of Reference" document posted under the Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network on the FCO website outlines the role of the Advisory Committee.

Steering committee

The steering committee was established on May 31st, 2005 and is made up of representatives from the urban and rural fire services, Alberta Firefighters Association, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, Lakeland Safety 1st Association, ACICR and the FCO. The committee has met twice and minutes of these meetings are posted under the Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network on the FCO website. The two co-chairs of the committee are Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner at (780) 415-0546 and Tim Vandenbrink, Assistant Fire Marshal in Fire Prevention at (780) 496-3856.

Five working groups were started to carry out an in-depth analysis and report on the following strategic goals and sub-goals at the next meeting, which is scheduled for early January 2006:

1. Engage key stakeholders
2. Identify leading practices
3. Create effective educators
 - a. consistent effective messages
 - b. co-ordinate training
4. Evidence-based programming
 - a. innovative ways to reach target audiences
 - b. fire/injury research and data
5. Sustain collaborative partnerships

"The steering committee has a key role to play in advancing the Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network activities."

Connection to FSAC and the bigger picture

The steering committee meetings were addressed by Spence Sample, Advisor to the Fire Commissioner on the Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC), a ministerial initiative to create a unifying framework for the Alberta fire service. The presentations explained how the network's activities can contribute to the "Public Fire Prevention & Education" priority, one of six priorities identified by FSAC. For further details on FSAC, please visit: www.fsacalberta.ca.

The future

The steering committee has a key role to play in advancing the Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network activities. Among some of its major tasks are:

- establishing an operational connection with FSAC
- creating a strategic plan
- creating an action plan
- inviting all Alberta fire departments to nominate members to the network. 🔥

For further information, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe at (780) 415-0546 or via e-mail at Mahendra.Wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca. Network activities and documents are posted on the FCO website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm under Fire & Injury Prevention Educators' Network.



Assessing the Risk

by Barry Bouwsema

The past decade has brought the issue of disasters to the forefront with numerous unfortunate events occurring. Following any major disaster, the topic of disaster preparedness becomes a topic of discussion and/or debate. The process of disaster planning follows an established procedure in ensuring preparedness.

Preparing for a disaster begins with a comprehensive risk analysis. This analysis provides planners with information about the types of emergencies that may occur and the potential consequences. Following an in-depth analysis, planners are able to determine what steps will be necessary to prevent the possible hazard and how to respond if an incident occurs.

The five steps to risk analysis include:

- **Identify the hazard** – the kinds of emergencies that have occurred or can occur in your jurisdiction.
- **Profile the hazard and the potential consequences** – review historical and predictive information on each hazard, and estimate the potential impact for your community.
- **Compare the risks** – through qualitative and quantitative analysis, determine the relative threat posed by the individual hazards; then, decide which hazards warrant special attention in the planning process.
- **Create a disaster response plan** – develop a planned response for the hazards identified (those that exceed the established threshold).
- **Test the plan** through table top exercises, functional exercises, or live disaster drills.

Risk analysis begins by identifying and listing the possible hazards present in your community or at your event. Identifying the hazards must also include considering the possibility of a second hazard, for example the loss of power or wide spread fires following a hurricane. A typical risk analysis will include such items as: avalanche, bomb threat, drought, earthquake, epidemic, fire, flood, hazardous material

Impact	Negligible = 1	Marginal = 5	Moderate = 10	Substantial = 50	Severe = 100	Disastrous = 1000
Likelihood	Extremely Unlikely = 1	Very Unlikely = 2	Unlikely = 5	Somewhat Likely = 10	Likely = 15	Highly Likely = 20
Step 1:	Event Impact + Community Impact + Participant Impact = Total Impact					
Step 2:	Total Impact x Likelihood = Total Risk Score					
Step 3:	Apply the total risk score to the quantitative assessment of residual risk to determine a response category					

Response Category	Negligible Less than 10	Marginally Acceptable 50 - 499	Undesirable 500 - 1,999	Intolerable Over 1,999
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spill, hurricane, landslide, loss of utilities, structural collapse, terrorist activity, tornados, weapons of mass destruction, wildfires; and the list goes on and on. Any event or situation in your community that would have a major impact, if a disaster occurred, should be considered and included in the risk analysis. (FEMA, 2000 Special Events Contingency Planning Manual, pg. 14 - 16).

After creating a list of possible risks, the characteristics of each hazard must be profiled to determine the consequences of the risk. Characteristics to identify include:

- **frequency of occurrence:** both historical and predicted.
- **magnitude and intensity:** the projected severity of the hazards occurrence.
- **location:** especially if the hazard is associated with a specific facility.
- **duration:** the length of time the hazard is expected to last.
- **spatial extent:** the geographical area expected to suffer the impact of the hazard.
- **seasonal pattern:** the time of the year that the hazard threat exists.
- **availability of warning and speed of onset:** the amount of time projected between the first warning and the actual occurrence of the hazard.

It may not be possible to address every possible hazard that has been identified as the list could be extremely lengthy.

It is therefore necessary to rank the possible hazards according to likelihood (extremely unlikely to highly likely) and impact (negligible to disastrous). Event impact, community impact, and participant impact are each rated on the impact risk score of 1 to 1,000, and then added together to give a total impact numerical value. The total impact score is then multiplied by the likelihood of the event, ranging in value from 1 to 20; this will give a final value or total risk score (see Table 1). By this method, the most significant hazard or threat can be dealt with in order of priority. The total risk score is then applied to a quantitative assessment of residual risk (see Table 2). The risk is then determined to be negligible, acceptable, marginally acceptable, undesirable, or intolerable. The established level of acceptability will determine if a disaster response procedure will be developed for the specific hazard. This is one of several models available for assessing risk.

The creation of the disaster plan is in response to quantitative assessment of residual risk. Identified hazards that are likely and have a significant impact must be addressed in the disaster plan. By having an established strategy for the mitigation of the hazard, if it occurs, a preferred outcome will hopefully be achieved. Emergency planning must be viewed as a process rather than an end



product. The process of planning involves the sharing of information, educating stakeholders, addressing concerns, and refining the communication process. Disaster preparedness planning is most effective when it is viewed as a continuous process.

For the identified high risk situations, scenarios that work through the hazard and the expected response should be developed. Table top exercises and mock

disasters take the proposed plan off the shelf and give it the opportunity of application. The performance of the plan and the responders can thereby be tested and evaluated. Any areas identified that require clarification or modification can be addressed. Testing the plan through an exercise validates the document. Perhaps the greatest value of an exercise is having the different agencies operating together prior to a real emergency situation.

Preparing for the disaster that could happen within your jurisdiction begins with a comprehensive risk analysis and ends with practicing the plan. Being prepared for the worst allows planners to have responders and needed supplies on hand if and when a disaster occurs. 🔥

Barry Bouwsema is a 21 year veteran of the fire service and is a company officer with Strathcona County Emergency Services. He was the director of emergency preparedness for the 2005 World Masters Games and is presently the director of emergency preparedness for the 2007 Western Canada Summer Games.

Update from fire etc.

Recognized as an academic unit of Lakeland College

On September 1, 2005, **fire etc.** became fully aligned as an academic unit of Lakeland College. Chris Senaratne, B.Sc. Eng. Hons., P.G.Dip., M.Phil., has been appointed to the position of Dean, **fire etc.** In this capacity, he is responsible for the operations of **fire etc.**, and reports to the Vice President, Academics and Learner Services, Lakeland College. Senaratne has been with **fire etc.** since 1991, serving in several senior administrative capacities.

Don Gnatiuk, who headed up the **fire etc.** team since 1994, has moved from direct operations of the organization to assume responsibilities as Executive Director of External Relations for Lakeland College.

Approximately a year ago, the **fire etc.** finance, registrar and student services units were amalgamated with Lakeland College. Being part of the college offers many advantages to **fire etc.** students, including opportunities to pursue higher studies such as an applied degree in emergency services, and the use of classroom space when **fire etc.** facilities are at maximum use.

The college Board of Governors and administration are keenly interested in the sustainability and growth of **fire etc.**, and are very supportive of efforts to expand programming and enhance the infrastructure.



*Chris Senaratne,
the new Dean of
fire etc.*

New developments in programming

The 2006 Training Calendar reflects a number of changes and advancements that have taken place at **fire etc.** during the past year:

- NFPA 1021 courses have been converted to modular format for greater access through independent study. It is also possible to enroll full-time to complete Level I in a five-week period, or Level II in a three-week period. With officer level study more readily available, this will help to address the fire service's growing need for personnel with the qualifications to fill senior positions.
- Course descriptions now state both the type of evaluation used and whether a course is available via correspondence, client-hosted or online delivery.
- With continued growth in the demand for client-hosted delivery, the Distance Learning department has revamped its information and processes for host departments into a separate



fire etc.

publication, which was mailed out with the Training Calendar in the fall. This comprehensive handbook can also be downloaded from www.fire-etc.ca. The detailed information is designed to enable host departments to more effectively co-ordinate their own training.

- The 2006 schedule for the full-time Fire Fighter Training Program includes dates for offerings in Red Deer and Calgary. **fire etc.** is very pleased to collaborate with Firemaster and the Calgary Fire Department in this delivery. For students, this offers more choice in dates as well as location.

Another partnership established in 2005 saw **fire etc.** deliver the 46-week Emergency Services Technology program to members of the Métis Nation of Alberta. This program is a first in Canada, and **fire etc.** is looking forward to many more initiatives in emergency training with Aboriginal communities.

Funding for upgrades

In September 2005, Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation announced it would provide \$2.5 million to **fire etc.** in this fiscal year for environmental and fuel distribution upgrades. 🔥



Aboriginal news update

Alberta's Aboriginal communities continue to work on a number of important initiatives to increase awareness about fire safety and prevention. Below is information about some of the most recent activities.

Métis Settlements Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA)

Fire chiefs for Alberta's Métis Settlements are moving one step closer to the creation of a Métis Settlement Fire Chiefs Association. A recent directive from the Métis Settlements General Council Executive to all Métis Settlement administrators and fire chiefs encouraged the development of a motion to accept the creation of the MSFCA at the next Métis Settlement General Council Assembly. The main objective of the MSFCA would be to improve the conditions of emergency services, fire protection and prevention and education and training for residents of the eight Métis Settlements and surrounding jurisdictions.

Making a national connection

This past September, Métis Settlement fire chiefs accepted an invitation to make a presentation to the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs at their conference in Richmond, British Columbia. The presentation focused on the various fire safety activities that are occurring across Alberta's Aboriginal communities. Participating in the presentation were Leon Cardinal, Fishing Lake Fire Chief and Judy Harvie, Fire Safety Officer with the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO).

Proactive approach to critical incident stress

Working with Capital Health, the Paddle Prairie Fire Department recently developed a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Program for its firefighters and to share with other Aboriginal fire departments when the need arises.



Descendants of Jasper Park who currently live around the Grande Cache area took part in a fire prevention presentation at the Palisades Centre in Jasper in August 2005. The group, some members of which have lost family members in a fire within the last five years, is hoping to use their positions as elders within Aboriginal communities to relay fire prevention information to other Aboriginal families.

Injury prevention partnership started

In an effort to address the growing concern about injuries in urban Aboriginal and rural Métis Settlement populations, the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research is partnering with the federal government's Public Health Agency of Canada. Working together with the FCO and other interested stakeholders, the focus will be on developing a co-ordinated and collaborative framework to guide actions that will help prevent injuries in both urban and rural areas of Alberta.

Enhanced training opportunities

- The FCO has been working with Portage College in Lac La Biche to provide seminars on a number of topics related to the fire service.
- This fall, the City of Edmonton's Emergency Response Department accepted two Aboriginal fire chiefs into their NFPA 1021 Officer Training program. Leon Cardinal, Fishing Lake Fire Chief, and Donald Crane, Saddle Lake Fire Chief, completed the full six week practical hands-on program in Edmonton, which started on September 14. Read Leon's first hand account on page 11.

Additionally, Wade Parenteau from Paddle Prairie and Judy Harvie from the FCO are completing the online Safety Codes Officer training. The online courses are part of a pilot program offered by Lakeland College (formerly fire etc.)



Kelly's winning entry.



This crest was created from a design by 12-year-old Kelly Jane Cunningham of Gift Lake as part of the FCO's contest to develop a uniform badge representing all Aboriginal peoples.

One trainee's perspective... I hope that everyone in his or her career has the opportunity to experience what I was fortunate enough to experience in training with the Station Officers Program with the City of Edmonton in September and October 2005.

To have the opportunity to train with the calibre of firefighters and human beings that were in the course is an absolute privilege that I will enjoy and treasure for the rest of my life. I extend my gratitude and friendship to the class, Captains Doug Grant, Michael O'Shaughnessy, Chris Fitzner, Graham Jones, Bob Stainthorp, Doug Gillard, Wayne Shacker, Don Zawaski, Rebecca Webber, Gary Weibe, Les McLean, Len Mushtuk, Greg Winter, Dale Dedio, Stew Owen, Randy Shantz, Troy Ciochetti, Richard Toszczak, Steen Petersen and Rod MacDonald. You shared as much as you could with Donald and myself in a very short period of time, guided us, taught us and laughed with us. Thank you.

Captain Bob Haley could read us very well, which enabled us to do better in the class. The impact that it will have on us is far reaching. I never had the privilege of meeting Fire Chief Donald Crane from the Saddle Lake First Nations until shortly before the course began and I am honoured to call you my friend. I am very grateful that you were a big part of this program.

None of this could have been possible without the vision of some very wise people. Pat Graham, Fire Commissioner of Alberta, had the foresight to realize that the Aboriginal peoples of this province needed an inlet to the Fire Service of Alberta and created the Aboriginal Liaison Officer position. Judy Harvie created this opportunity for Donald Crane and myself. Your support and guidance helped make this opportunity the success it is. Fire Chief Randy Wolsey of Edmonton allowed us to have the opportunity to be the first people from outside of the City of Edmonton to train in the Station Officers Program. Thank you to each of you! I also want thank my family for supporting me to achieve more and I truly appreciate the sacrifices made by them for the duration of the program. I also extend my gratitude to the Council and Administration of the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement and the executive of the Métis Settlements General Council for allowing me to participate in this program.

Leon Cardinal
Fishing Lake Fire Chief



Donald Crane (bottom row, far right) Fire Chief of Saddle Lake First Nations and Leon Cardinal (bottom row, far left) Fire Chief of Fishing Lake Métis Settlement graduated from the City of Edmonton Fire Rescue Services' Station Officer Promotional Program in October. The pair were the first members of an external fire service to take part in the training.

Fishing Lake activities

The Fishing Lake Fire Department has been busy promoting fire prevention and safety in the community and surrounding area. Most recently, the fire department, which is about an hour north of Lloydminster, has also struck an arrangement to provide fire service response for the oil and gas industries in the area. In addition to generating revenue for the fire department, it is also providing the fire department with ongoing hands-on practice.

Drawing contest winner announced

The winner of the drawing campaign promoted by the FCO to create a new crest for their uniforms to represent all Aboriginal people was recently announced. Kelly Jane Cunningham, a 12-year-old girl from Gift Lake in northern Alberta, received a cheque for \$100 from the Apeetogosan Métis Development Inc. Business Corporation. All contest participants received a t-shirt from the FCO and a crest from the Fire Services Advisory Committee. 🔥



The first National Aboriginal Firefighter Competition was held this year in High Level. The team from Saddle Lake went on to win first prize.

Fire departments played important role in flood survival

Summer is supposed to be a time of warmth, sun and vacations, but this past summer proved to be just the opposite for communities in southern Alberta. The rain and floods that devastated several municipalities this summer tested both the physical and mental resources of the townspeople. Fortunately, local fire departments stepped up to play a major role in the effort to control and cope with the deluge.

One of the main problems facing those in the field was the duration and consistency of the rain. Though most communities had a Municipal Emergency Plan, these plans were not developed to deal specifically with flood conditions. “The fact that the rain and floods were of long duration meant that our resources were very taxed,” said Chief Leonard Zebedee of High River, one of the hardest hit communities. “We had to ask for help from other towns. The Regional Mutual Aid Group, comprised of several towns in southern Alberta, was part of the Emergency Management Plan, but these towns were also fighting their own floods and had little to spare. However, we received help from Strathmore and Airdrie and as far away as Taber.”

Paul Kaiser, Fire Chief of Okotoks, faced many of the same problems. The district was swamped with three floods, resulting from extensive rain, saturated ground water flooding and widespread river overflow. The Emergency Management Plan that was in place was not specifically designed for flood emergencies, but provisions were made to put people in place for emergency planning. The community was able to get such equipment as sand bags and pumps into place. As was the case with many towns, problems were solved as they arose through the constant brainstorming of key personnel. “Teamwork became the key factor to saving both lives and property,” added Kaiser.



Drumheller (top) and the Blood Reserve (bottom) were among the many Alberta communities threatened by flooding in June.

Bill Bachynski, Drumheller's Fire Chief and Deputy Director of District Services, also cited teamwork and the town's Municipal Emergency Plan for being able to “keep ahead of the curve.” Drumheller received notice that an enormous rainstorm in the Banff area had dumped 175 mm in the Red Deer River and initial estimates indicated that the city would be inundated with over 2,300 cubic metres of water per second; a severe threat to the infrastructure around Drumheller. “While the flood estimate was later revised downward, the early warning enabled volunteers to build temporary dikes and to set up evacuation centres,” advised Bachynski.

Chief Oscar Cotton of the Blood Reserve and his staff also found overland flooding to be the most critical problem. A disaster situation was declared on June 7, but meetings had been underway since June 3 to develop evacuation and flood control plans. An Emergency Plan had been developed in 2003 as a response to severe flooding in 2002 and the community was in close contact with provincial agencies to help with flood control and evacuation needs.

In all cases, the most important task for the fire chiefs concerned was the protection of life.

“Because of the continuous rain we were able to give people a day-and-a-half notice of high water, but the problem



High River residents worked feverishly to fill sandbags to stave off rising floodwaters.

was that we couldn't always tell how high the water was going to go and where flooding would take place," said High River Fire Chief Zebedee. "We did not want a situation of 'crying wolf' where we would be telling people to move, then telling them they could go back home, and then telling them to move again. We made predictions of how much water we would be dealing with, but certain

areas would receive more. There was an ongoing evaluation of rising water and we put notices out of high water in those areas that we felt would receive more. These notices were put on the radio and people went door-to-door to warn people of rising water. When the situation became worse we put out voluntary evacuation notices and set up

safe areas where people could go. All emergency organizations, such as police and ambulance services, were put on alert. People were urged to leave before the situation became worse. Finally, a mandatory evacuation order was given."

For Kaiser, quick action was mandatory. The fact that there were three floods in his area meant that the crisis was ongoing. The main task was to alert

people in low-lying flood areas and downstream, where communities and businesses were in the flood plain. "Because the flood waters were rising so quickly," Kaiser said, "rescue boats were not practical until later." Seventy-seven people had to be evacuated by helicopter.

Bachynski credits Drumheller's Municipal Emergency Plan for the city's successful evacuation of 3,000 residents and the fact that the community was able to prevent major flood damage. Speaking in the August/September 2005 issue of the *Canadian Emergency News*, Bachynski stated that the emergency plan had been developed over a period of years by the disaster services unit and that the plan is a "living document" subject to regular updating. He also pointed out that the people who executed the plan had training and experience in its use and were familiar with disaster services techniques.

The main concern for Chief Cotton was the residents living in the western edge of the reserve and the evacuation of the elderly and the disabled. The duration

150 hours of planning, co-ordinating and doughnut eating

(A personal perspective on working in the EMA Operations Centre during Alberta's 2005 summer deluge of rain by Municipal Affairs Public Affairs Officer Kari-Ann Kuperis)

A series of severe rainstorms in June that caused flooding in much of central and southern Alberta saw an increase in the already busy pace at Emergency Management Alberta (EMA). With the threatened arrival of 'the perfect storm,' a cross-government team hit the ground running when the EMA Operations Centre went 24/7 on Thursday, June 16.

Staff from nine provincial ministries worked together with representatives from the non-government sector, the federal government (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, the Department of National Defence (DND), Environment Canada) and the RCMP to compile resource lists, share information and co-ordinate responses in the face of the storm.

When the Operations Centre was deactivated late in the afternoon on June 22, approximately 150 continuous hours of hard work and co-operation between all parties had occurred. From working 12-hour shifts to filing regular updates to a willingness to dig deep to find requested information, everyone involved did an excellent job in dealing with a situation that could have been much worse without the work they were doing. Kudos especially to the staff at EMA – they were tireless, always cheerful and went out of their way to make sure that the working conditions were as stress-free as possible.



High River was one of the communities most affected by June's floods. Here, the extent of the flooding is viewed from the air.

of the rainfall meant the further west people lived, the more vulnerable they were to rising waters. There was a danger that people would be stranded, so agencies worked together to evacuate people to safer ground.

The second major task for all concerned was the protection of property and infrastructure. Sandbags were used to keep water in set channels and away from property as much as possible.

continued on next page »

Towns helped each other to put sandbags around buildings and structures, with teamwork becoming the key to success in this area.

A side effect of the floods was the exhaustion and stress of firefighters on the front lines. "These individuals were also flood victims and were facing the same worry and devastation as other townsfolk," said Zebedee. "In High Level, the Rotary Club pitched in and pumped basements and cleaned up for those firefighters unable to get the time to work on their own homes."

Today, southern Alberta towns have nearly cleaned up after the flooding, though there is still some work to be done. In Drumheller, the work is ongoing,



A closer look at some of the damage wrought by June's flooding in Okotoks.

but progress has definitely been made. Okotoks is "almost back to normal", but residents are still restoring damaged houses and repairing wells and park areas. High River still has problems with infrastructure such as sewers and sump-pumps, and some homes are still removing mould caused by the flood

waters, but the town is nearly back to normal. On the Blood Reserve, 500 houses were damaged and repairs are not yet complete. Though people are anxious about winter coming, they realize that it takes time to get everything back in order.

Despite the long hours and hard work, what left the greatest impression on the fire chiefs was the attitude of the volunteers who pitched in, and the spirit of commitment in the communities. People came from all over the province to help, often taking time off work. Many groups, both public and private, adults and children, spent untold hours doing anything that needed doing. "Volunteers came from all over the province," said Zebedee. "Seeing people come together to help was rewarding. Young people did not get nearly enough credit for their help." 

Alberta Risk Protocol Project


Innovation Program funding provided to FCO

The Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is about to embark on a truly innovative and unique approach to helping fire departments across Alberta. The FCO recently received approval to proceed on the Alberta Risk Protocol (ARP) Project, one of 17 projects approved for Innovation Program funding support from the Government of Alberta.

Supporting the government's "safe Alberta" strategy, the ARP project will enable an inter-provincial approach to community risk management. The project will create an IT solution, the first of its type, to allow the province and local authorities to perform gap analysis on public safety initiatives or challenges. By reducing the complex science of risk theory to a fully-automated software protocol that will identify, assess, rank and recommend potential and alternative solutions to any form of risk that an

emergency service would respond to, fire service organizations will be able to rationally spend their limited resources in efficient and effective ways that directly and positively impact the safety of their citizens.

Solutions will be based on industry leading practices that are acceptable in Alberta. The project will rely on existing data bases such as FERS, AERIS and POSSE and on proposed systems such as the Emergency Management Operating System (EMOS), which will also increase the value of these systems to Albertans. The program will be fully automated, which means that no special skills will be required to use it. It will also be available to all communities regardless of risk complexity.

"This is truly an exciting and innovative project, and one that I'm anxious to see get underway," said Pat Graham, Fire Commissioner of Alberta. "Essentially, what the project will do is create a user friendly risk management tool that is capable of serving all communities in the province. It will allow local authorities to make faster and more effective public safety decisions based on reliable data as well as help them understand the value and existence of partnerships in the delivery of public safety services. The end result will be a more efficient use of resources and safer communities throughout Alberta." 

For more information about the ARP project, please contact Spence Sample at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 644-5032 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton) or e-mail to spence.sample@gov.ab.ca.



Successful Muscular Dystrophy fundraising tradition continues

Congratulations to the Fort McMurray Fire Department, who recently won the prestigious National Fire Department of the Year Award for its fundraising efforts against Muscular Dystrophy.

“This award is indicative of the extraordinary commitment and generosity of the community of Fort McMurray, which enabled us to raise \$42,000 towards the fight against Muscular Dystrophy,” said Fire Chief Jeff Carlisle.

Prior to being chosen for the National Award, Fort McMurray’s firefighters were recognized at both the district and regional levels for their fundraising

efforts. Even though there are only three families in Fort McMurray who are registered with Muscular Dystrophy Canada, the hard work of the Fort McMurray Fire Department raised more money than any other fire department in Alberta or the Northwest Territories.

Fundraising for Muscular Dystrophy has been going on in Fort McMurray for 20 to 25 years, but 2005 was one of the most successful years. Steven Kozelenko, who has since transferred to Red Deer, chaired the fundraising effort, which included many firefighters participating in the process along with local businesses and media. The year’s activities included charity hockey games, a slow pitch

baseball game, firemen acting as guest barmen at local taverns, a bachelor auction and a silent auction. According to firefighter Brad Grainger, one of the most successful events was the June 7 pancake breakfast. “It was just huge. One of our best ever,” said Grainger.

The origins of fundraising for the struggle against Muscular Dystrophy go back to the 1920s. During that time, a Chicago firefighter developed the disease and his co-workers took up a collection for him. Since then, collecting for Muscular Dystrophy has become a tradition among North American firefighters, a tradition proudly upheld by the Fort McMurray Fire Department. 🔥

Sexsmith’s junior firefighters

Creating firefighters at an early age

For the last four years, the Sexsmith Fire Department has been providing school children with the opportunity to attend a rather unusual summer camp – the Junior Firefighter Program. For one week, kids from six to 12 years of age learn about fire safety and prevention, the fire triangle, how fire works and how to get out of a fire safely. Arts and crafts reinforce the training and allow the children to express the safety concepts creatively. Kate Potter, who is closely involved with the program, says: “Not only does the Junior Firefighters camp augment what the children learn in school about fire safety but it also gives them a taste of what firefighting is. The camp may provide some of the children with a career goal as a firefighter.”

“...The camp may provide some of the children with a career goal as a firefighter.”

The camp has undergone some changes in its four-year existence. Initially, it was designed as a one week, 40-hour camp held in the fire hall. However, two camps were held this year due to a high level of interest from communities as far away as Grande Prairie. Each camp had a maximum of 15 children and two full-time firefighters taught each camp.

The curriculum followed in the Junior Firefighter Program is flexible. Though there is a basic strategy, the instructors adapt the program to the physical size and age of the children and their interests. Activities are used on a “what works” basis in an effort to keep the children interested and motivated. If older children return to the camp after having attended one course, they help with teaching duties.

Potter feels that the growing success of the Junior Firefighter Program has been due to the continuing, and growing, response from the community. “The more kids we have, the more camps we’ll have.” 🔥

For more information about the program, please contact Kate Potter at (780) 568-3104.

Fire Electronic Reporting System update

In previous issues of *Alberta Fire News*, we introduced and kept you up-to-date on the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) Fire Electronic Reporting System (FERS). The following outlines the progress since the last update in August 2005.

On-Line FERS users (via *milenet*)

The following FERS enhancements will be implemented in January 2006:

1. There will be fewer code validations when reports are submitted or finalized.
2. The 'Occupants in Dwelling Unit at Time of Fire' field on the Smoke Detector Report screen will become optional.
3. It will be mandatory to choose at least one variable within the 'Person(s) Starting Fire' field (unknown is one of these options).

Fire Departments uploading fire data into FERS (via private software programs)

- FERS enhancements scheduled to take place in January 2006 have led to corresponding revisions in the file interface specifications. Applicable fire departments were given a copy of the specifications in November 2005 and were requested to prepare the changes in their UAT environment. The changes are scheduled to move into production when all parties co-ordinate a common implementation date.
- St. Albert, using the Crisis program, is now uploading live fire data in FERS.

Fire departments submitting hard copy fire reports

Fillable PDF report forms are available on the FCO website.

milenet

As of November 1:

- 345 of the 362 municipalities have signed the *milenet* agreement and have access to *milenet*. (This count of municipalities now includes Métis Settlements and Townsites).
- 147 of the 345 municipalities with *milenet* access have signed up their fire department(s) for the FERS application within *milenet*. 🔥

As FERS is continually streamlined to meet the fire reporting service needs of individual organizations, your feedback is essential in the streamlining process. Please provide your feedback to Te-Jay Smart, Fire Commissioner's Office, at (780) 644-4692 or te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca

Alberta-British Columbia Partnership

Provincial fire commissioners working together

The Fire Commissioner's Offices (FCO) of British Columbia and Alberta have established a joint committee to explore and implement opportunities to share information and programs between the offices and the fire services of these two provinces.

The joint committee is co-chaired by Ernie Polsom, Alberta's Assistant Fire Commissioner – Operations and Bob Turley, British Columbia's Deputy Fire Commissioner – Operations. Other members of the committee include Spence Sample (FCO Alberta), Fire Chief Fred Height (Banff), Richard Simpson (Deputy Fire Commissioner, B.C.) and Deputy Fire Chief Rick Owens (Vernon). In future, the committee will include

representatives from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the B.C. Forest Service. The committee met twice in 2005, in Kelowna in June and Calgary in October. The next scheduled meeting takes place in Victoria in February 2006.

One of the first priorities of the committee is to develop a formal Terms of Reference as well as a mutual aid resource sharing protocol. The group has also established a working committee to explore an apparatus identification system that would be compatible between jurisdictions.

"While the committee is still very much in its early stages, we are pleased with the progress so far," said Ernie

Polsom. "Our original starting goal was developing and maintaining a dialogue about exploring opportunities to share. From those discussions, we've already rationalized Alberta's interpretation of the Incident Command System with B.C.'s terminology and system, shared key investigative course work with Alberta, introduced the AERIS system to B.C. and shared secondment agreements and other partnership arrangements too."

As Polsom points out, regardless of where you live in North America, many of the issues are the same so it only makes sense to develop liaisons and partnerships with other related organizations. And with B.C. being Alberta's next-door neighbour, it's a great place to start. 🔥



Partners make progress on transportation issues

The Fire Commissioner's Office and the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) have been working together with Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation to clarify changes in transportation regulations and the drop in vehicle weights that impact the fire service in Alberta. A draft document has been approved in principle by the AFCA. Several issues of concern, such as contents of drivers' records and the commercial vehicle inspection program, have been resolved, and the AFCA and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation are putting together the final details on a preventative maintenance regime that all fire departments across Alberta can follow. Most important for the fire service is the inclusion of ways to positively reward fire departments that are doing a good job. The AFCA is pushing for the inclusion of the ability of fire departments that follow the regime to be able to apply for a permit as an individual municipality, which would reduce the frequency of the inspections. Those fire departments that can demonstrate they're following the regime will be granted the permit.

The AFCA is currently preparing a *Compliance in Alberta for Municipal Firefighting Vehicles* document, which will be distributed for fire departments for review and input.



Another issue that is still being worked out relates to Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation and Alberta registries regarding the possibility of pulling abstracts for employees without cost to a municipality. Currently Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding between them and the AFCA regarding the maintenance regime, and the AFCA has requested the involvement of Don Henry from Lakeland College.

"We're certainly making progress on the transportation issue," said Pat Graham, Fire Commissioner of Alberta. "The collaboration and collegiality among the three key partners – the Fire Commissioner's Office, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation – is enabling us to work together to achieve common ground and ultimately success for the fire service in Alberta."

The collaboration and collegiality among the three key partners... is enabling us to work together to achieve common ground and ultimately success for the fire service in Alberta.

Pat Graham,
Fire Commissioner of Alberta

Presentations on this issue will be made in early 2006 at the regional meetings of the AFCA. Information about these presentations will be provided through the FCO or the AFCA. 🔥

Recognizing fire service personnel

Don't miss out

This is a reminder that the deadline for nominations for the 2006 presentation of the Alberta Emergency Services Medal is January 31, 2006.

The Alberta Emergency Services Medal was established to pay tribute to

outstanding full-time, part-time and volunteer members who have committed 12 or more years of their careers to emergency services in Alberta.

There is also a federal Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal honouring

members of a recognized Canadian fire service who have completed 20 years of service. 🔥

For more information about the criteria for these medals, please contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392.

A strategy for injury prevention

Saving thousands of lives, reducing hospital care expenditures and shrinking a \$15 billion burden to Canadian taxpayers are among the benefits of a proposed National Injury Prevention Strategy by injury prevention groups and the insurance industry.

Canada's home, car and business insurers and national injury prevention organization SMARTRISK, along with other consultative partners, have called on the federal government to implement the recommendations contained in the comprehensive study: *Ending Canada's Invisible Epidemic: A Strategy for Injury Prevention*.

The report recommended a national strategy to prevent injury be built on six strategic pillars:

1. Leadership from the federal government.
2. Policy analysis and development.
3. An effective, integrated surveillance system.
4. Strategic research on how best to prevent injuries.
5. A national fund to support community-based prevention initiatives.
6. Public information and education.

The strategy would also involve the creation of the Injury Prevention Centre of Canada, which would collect data and research, and help communities and governments implement effective, evidence-based strategies to reduce injury. This strategy, the report says, could dramatically reduce the human, economic and health system costs of injury.

The report, funded in part by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, followed months of consultations, debates, dialogue, document preparation and production by the partners involved, which also included Safe Communities Foundation, Safe Kids Canada and ThinkFirst Canada.

"Our work is not yet over, and much needs to be done to see this vision become a reality," said Dr. Robert Conn of SMARTRISK. "As a first step, we are asking for participation in a letter-writing campaign to demonstrate to the federal and provincial governments that there

is strong support across Canada for this important initiative." The report and a number of draft letters, addressed to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, the Minister of State for Public Health, the Premiers and the provincial Health Ministers, are available at www.timeforaction.ca. Everyone is encouraged to use their own words and personal examples and adapt the letters as they see fit. The electronic system used for this letter-writing campaign will direct letters as both e-mail and a fax.

"We strongly encourage you to participate in this letter writing campaign. Your voice and your support are critical in moving this strategy forward," said Conn. "We need to demonstrate to the politicians that Canadians care about this issue." 🗨️

For further information, please contact Peter O'Neill at (416) 596-2721 or by e-mail at poneill@smartrisk.ca

This article was provided by Peter O'Neill, Vice President, Operations, SMARTRISK.

FCO's newest employee

Putting the spotlight on... Nadine Elcock

First impressions are important, and the Fire Commissioner's Office's newest employee is a great addition to the office. Nadine Elcock joined the FCO in January 2005 as an Administrative Support/ Receptionist. "I truly enjoy what I'm doing and there are really no words to describe it.



Nadine Elcock

It's just a great place to work and great people to work with," said Nadine. Prior to the FCO, Nadine worked as a Ramp Agent at the Edmonton International Airport for two years, and was a manager with Petro Canada for three-and-a-half years before that.

Originally from Jamaica, Nadine says she first experienced snow when she moved to Edmonton to join her sister in March 1993. As Nadine recalls, one of her first impressions of Edmonton was white and cold. "Everything was so different, and everyone was all bundled up." Now comfortably settled in Edmonton, Nadine says she enjoys being active by working out in the gym and playing soccer year round. 🗨️



Q&A's about Alberta's Safety Codes



Ray Ligenza, Calgary and Ray Cox, Edmonton

Questions about Alberta's Safety Codes?

Contact Ray Cox in Edmonton or Ray Ligenza in Calgary at 1-866-421-6929. Ray and Ray are technical advisors for Technical Services, Building and Fire Safety in the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Q. Does a flashing green light give any special rights to responding firefighters and what are the limitations on their use?

A. Firefighters may be issued and use green flashing lights to aid their response to emergencies as permitted by the provisions of Section 28 of the *Traffic Safety Act – Vehicle Equipment Regulation*. These green lights may be used by any firefighter, volunteer or career. Other emergency responders such as ambulance or search and rescue workers may not use the green light.

The green light is not an “emergency light” and does not give any special powers or authority to a responding firefighter. The intent of the green light is to identify a firefighter on his or her way to an emergency to other drivers, the public and, most importantly, the police officer on his or her way to an emergency. The green light does not, however, convey any authority to allow a firefighter to speed, disobey traffic control devices or assume the right of way over other traffic.

Use of the flashing green light is conditional on a bylaw being passed by the Municipal Council for that jurisdiction permitting their use. Because a bylaw passed by a municipality can only apply within its boundaries,

firefighters cannot use their green lights outside that jurisdiction. For example, if a village passes a green light bylaw and the surrounding county council does not, the firefighter may only use the light within the village boundaries. The existence of a green light bylaw in a jurisdiction does not automatically give permission to firefighters from other areas to use their lights. The bylaw must have considered which municipality’s firefighters are authorized to use green lights.

Q. Does a Fire Safety Codes Officer require a warrant or voluntary consent to enter a commercial building for the purposes of conducting an investigation?

A. The short answer is no. Section 48 of the *Safety Codes Act RSA 2000* authorizes a safety codes officer to investigate an unsafe condition, accident or fire to determine its cause, origin and circumstances.

For the purposes of conducting the investigation, the powers outlined in sections 34 and 35, dealing with inspections, are given to the safety codes officer.

If the safety codes officer wishes to hold the premise longer than the 48 hours indicated in section 48(2)(b), he or she will need to prepare an Information Warrant requesting authorization to hold the premise and present it to a justice. The safety codes officer should make that judgment early in the investigative process and begin the process of obtaining the warrant if he or she believes there may be a possibility that the investigation will extend beyond 48 hours.

There is no requirement in the *Safety Codes Act* to obtain a voluntary consent except when an investigation is required in a dwelling unit that is in use as a dwelling unit. In this case, a voluntary consent or a warrant is required prior to conducting the investigation. 🔥

For the most current versions of the Voluntary Consent to Search and Seize, Information, Warrant and other documents, please refer to the Fire Commissioner's website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm/index.cfm.

Note: Please forward any questions you may have for "You Were Asking...?" to te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca

“The existence of a green light bylaw in a jurisdiction does not automatically give permission to firefighters from other areas to use their lights.”

Launching the December holiday campaign


The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger. In Alberta, the number of fires, fire deaths, fire injuries and fire-related property losses all significantly increase during this time of year. Along with the additional hazards that winter brings, such as colder temperatures and the use of heating

equipment, the December holiday season further increases the danger of fire by adding the excitement and distractions of visiting relatives, children on school holidays, shopping, decorating, cooking and festivities, which can lead to compromises on safety.

In an attempt to lower the frequency and severity of fires in Alberta during this time of year, the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is launching its annual Holiday Fire Safety Campaign, which runs December 15-31. The 2005 Holiday Fire Safety Campaign Kit is available on the FCO's website under "Campaigns."

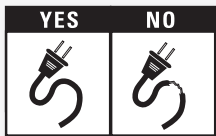
In response to feedback from previous campaigns, the FCO has made some exciting changes to this year's campaign kit, including:

- the safety tips sheets have been removed from the kit, updated and posted on the FCO website under the heading "Fire Facts" at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm
- a package of support materials has been added to the kit to simplify the delivery of holiday fire prevention and safety messages within Alberta communities and homes. These new support materials include an event-planning guide, graphics, children's activity sheets and a Holiday Fire Facts tip sheet.

Fire departments, schools, workplaces, the media and other individuals and organizations are encouraged to use, copy and distribute any or all of the material in the campaign kit. Materials used from the kit must include an attribution line. 

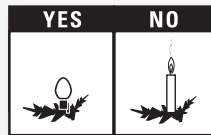
For more information regarding holiday fire safety or the 2005 Holiday Fire Safety Campaign, visit the website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm, contact Te-Jay Smart at (780) 644-4692 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton) or e-mail to te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca.

The Night Before Christmas for Firefighters



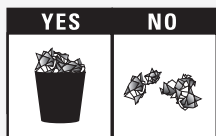
'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse,
When down through the chimney all covered with soot,
Came the SPIRIT OF FIRE, an ugly galoot.

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.

Alberta Fire News is often asked about the origin of the *The Night Before Christmas for Firefighters* poem. We're pleased to offer the following explanation from Joan Armstrong, Manager, Policy and Strategic Services at Alberta Municipal Affairs: "When I was a little girl in the 1950s, my dad brought home the poem, which had been published in the Maritime Telegraph and Telephone Company Ltd. newsletter, "The Bulletin." Technology being what it was, to share the poem it was necessary to type it. (No photocopiers, word processing or e-mail). I still have this yellowed, typewritten copy at home. I pulled it out and dusted it off a few years ago to share with the FCO. It had to be tuned up a bit for currency so that people could relate to it today, but those of us who have been around for a while can still relate to the original version and I enjoy the memories it evokes."



Digest

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we announce that Senior Captain Mark Lavergne of the Wainwright Fire Rescue Department passed away suddenly in his sleep on August, 24 2005 at the age of 38. Mark was a dedicated member of the fire service for nearly 17 years. His life was centred around his family, his love of the fire service and NASCAR racing. His death leaves a real void within the department. His desire to be a mentor to younger members of the department and a keen interest in learning everything he could to be a better firefighter was evident every day. Mark will be truly missed. His positive impact on the fire department, his family and many close friends made for an especially difficult time.

* * * * *

The Town of Onoway also suffered a tremendous loss when their Fire Chief Karl Umstatter was killed in a motorcycle collision while on vacation in the Oregon area this past summer. Umstatter and his wife Darlene were riding their Goldwing motorcycle when they struck a vehicle making a left turn in their path.

Punishment for illegal use of fireworks

Two men in the Boyle area were fined more than \$1,500 each last summer for illegally lighting fireworks in an Alberta forest. In addition to the fine, both men were sentenced to six months probation and were required to place \$250 worth of advertising in both local newspapers to apologize for their actions.

FCO Website Update

The Fire Commissioner's Office website continues to grow with new and updated material on a regular basis. One of the most recent additions is a 17-second video clip about the Risk Watch program. Part of the video that was produced by Paul Little and the Lethbridge Fire Department, the clip starts with a testimonial from a young man who learned the hard way that safety is a top priority. There is also now an Aboriginal section on the website, including a tip sheet and other information related to fire safety in Aboriginal communities. As well, regular updates, campaign information and tips sheets about a variety of topics are also available. Check it out at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm



Hoselay Competition Results

Winners of the 2005 Hoselay Competition, held in Myrnam this past August are:

First place – Vegreville

Second place – Westlock

Third place – St. Paul Regulars

Congratulations also go out to everyone who participated. This year's competition marks the final year of active participation of the FCO in the event. While the FCO will continue to assist by publicizing the event and offering a trophy, the actual organization for future events will be the responsibility of the organizing committee made up of interested fire departments.

Alberta fire service activities calendar – 2005-06

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
December Holiday Fire Safety Campaign	December 15-31, 2005	FCO website ⁽¹⁾
Burn Awareness Week	February 6-12, 2006	FCO website ⁽²⁾
Getting to Know Fire Workshops	Various	FCO website ⁽²⁾
2004 Annual Statistical Report	January/February 2006	FCO website ⁽²⁾
Fire Service Curling Bonspiel	January 25-28, 2006	St. Paul, Alberta ⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ Fire Commissioner's Office Campaign Kit available at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm.

⁽²⁾ Contact the Fire Commissioner's Office for more information at (780) 427-8392.

⁽³⁾ For more information contact the St. Paul Fire Department – Terry Senecal at (780) 645-4100 or Glen at (780) 645-3149.

Easy Way to Verify Trademark Labels

Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC) and Underwriters' Laboratories Incorporated (UL) have established an online field reporting system that allows you to identify any ULC or UL trademark violations. It also allows for the reporting of malfunctioning equipment bearing the ULC or UL label.

Clicking on the link www.ulc.ca will take you to the ULC website where you can provide ULC and UL with the necessary information for them to take appropriate corrective actions. You can also report product incidents by using the "link" button on the FCO website, which links you to the various agencies.

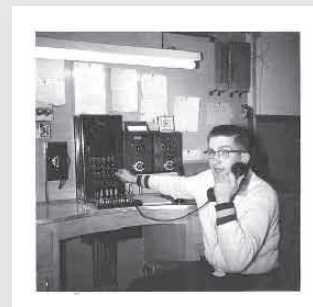
People rely on products meeting the appropriate standards for both personal and property protection. Authorities having jurisdiction play an important role in maintaining the people's trust and confidence in the safety system by reporting deficiencies, counterfeiting and unauthorized use of trademark standards. We hope you will bookmark the above listed website and use it to report any problems or suspicious activities involving the labeling process.

New Editorial Board Member Announced

Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham recently appointed Dave Riddell as the insurance representative on the Editorial Board of *Alberta Fire News*. Dave brings over 17 years of experience from the insurance/adjustment field and will be an excellent source of information for our readership. Dave can be contacted at (780) 466-6544 or email at david.riddell@cgi.com

Oops!

In the September 2005 issue of *Alberta Fire News*, the 1958 photo of Steve Bordinik was mistakenly replaced with another photo. Here's the one we had intended.



Parks Canada fire hall attendant Steve Bordinik at work at the fire hall dispatch room – 1958.

Exploring the military's approach to firefighting

Despite many changes to the structure of Canada's armed forces presence in Alberta (notably the shut down of CFB Calgary in 1998), there is still a strong military presence in Alberta. There are three armed forces bases (Edmonton, Wainwright and Suffield) and one air force base (4 Wing Cold Lake) operating in our province. However, what is not as well known is the fact that each base has its own fire department. Approximately 160 firefighters work on these four bases; half of the firefighters are civilians and half are military personnel.

According to Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Steve Shand, fire chief at the Edmonton Garrison, the Edmonton base is the only Canadian Forces Land Force Command (the Force's army branch) fire hall comprised entirely of military personnel. Traditionally army bases have relied on civilian employees hired by the Department of National Defense (DND) as firefighters, while air bases have used military personnel firefighters. When the Edmonton base changed from an air force to an army base, the fire department retained its military firefighters.

Regardless of employer, all military base firefighters receive much of their training from the Canadian Armed Forces Fire Academy at Camp Borden, Ontario.

"Most of the firefighters at the Edmonton base are here to receive OJT – on the job training," said Shand, a firefighter for more than 33 years, and fire chief at CFB Edmonton for the past year. "They arrive here from Borden after 78 training days and usually remain for OJT for about 18 months, then return to Borden for an additional 53 training days. From there they are then posted to work on a number of bases or posted to a Naval ship or to the Joint Nuclear Biological Chemical Defence (NBCD) Company in Trenton, Ontario for three years."



Lieutenant Jay Melvin, fire chief at 4 Wing Cold Lake with a Walter 4500 Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting Vehicle and a CF-18 Hornet fighter jet.

For Suffield and Wainwright, in addition to their training at Borden, many of their personnel obtain additional training through **fire etc.**

"**fire etc.** is less than 40 kilometres from our location so it makes sense to send many of our firefighters there for some of their training," said Norrie Mills, Wainwright's fire chief for the past two and a half years, and a firefighter for 33 years.

Each firefighter on a military base also participates in training every day. "Firefighters must do one hour of physical fitness as well as two hours of firefighter training each day," adds Brent Binnie, Suffield's fire chief. "We develop an in-house training program that's published each month and each firefighter on each shift must complete their training every day."

That procedure is also carried out at the Cold Lake air force base, said Lieutenant Jay Melvin, fire chief at 4 Wing Cold Lake.

At 31 years of age, Melvin is the armed forces' youngest fire chief. He oversees a staff of 45 military firefighters and one civilian FR2 firefighter, who works as the base's fire inspector. 4 Wing Cold Lake is Alberta's only air base and one of the busiest military bases in Canada, which certainly keeps its firefighters active.

"Naturally, most of our calls are aircraft related, including standbys and inflight emergencies," said Melvin. "At Cold Lake we train firefighters for 'catch the cable', but we also handle all fire safety aspects of the structural side too, including fire inspections of all buildings on the base and being first responders. With the base in a remote area away from the town, we are also responsible for medical emergencies."

At the Wainwright base, Fire Chief Mills explains that in addition to responding to structural and ambulance calls, they are also involved in tent and vehicle calls, serve as standby for aircraft and respond to range fires resulting from the bivouac training that takes place there.

Alberta's Military Bases at a Glance

Edmonton Garrison

Fire Chief: Chief Warrant Office Steve Shand

Strength: 35 military firefighters, all EMR trained, plus one civilian fire inspector,

Calls: Average of 350 calls per year. From January 1, 2005 to August 31, 2005, calls included 22 fires, 48 emergency responses, 154 non-fires, 83 aircraft standbys and incidents and 18 mutual aid calls,

Jurisdiction: 5.8 million square metres of building space, and a large number of buildings and installations throughout Alberta, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories,

Equipment: one structural pumper, one aerial tower, two crash vehicles, and two utility vehicles.

Cold Lake

Fire Chief: Lieutenant Jay Melvin

Strength: 45 military firefighters,

Calls: Average of 800 to 900 calls per year. 2004 calls included nine fires, 300 non-fire incidents, six mutual aid responses and 565 aircraft incidents,

Jurisdiction: 3,441.11 square hectares/34.46 square kilometres,

Equipment: Four aircraft rescue firefighter vehicles, two structural pumpers, utility vehicle and a command vehicle.

Suffield

Fire Chief: Brent Binnie

Strength: 37 civilian firefighters,

Calls: Average of 350 calls per year – most of the calls are for structural fires, but other calls include haz mat, aircraft (helicopter) and ambulance/medical,

Jurisdiction: 2,600 square kilometre base plus 1,000 kilometres of county land,

Equipment: One ambulance, one light rescue vehicle, pumper, snorkel fire truck and a county fire truck supplied by the Municipal District of Cypress.

Wainwright

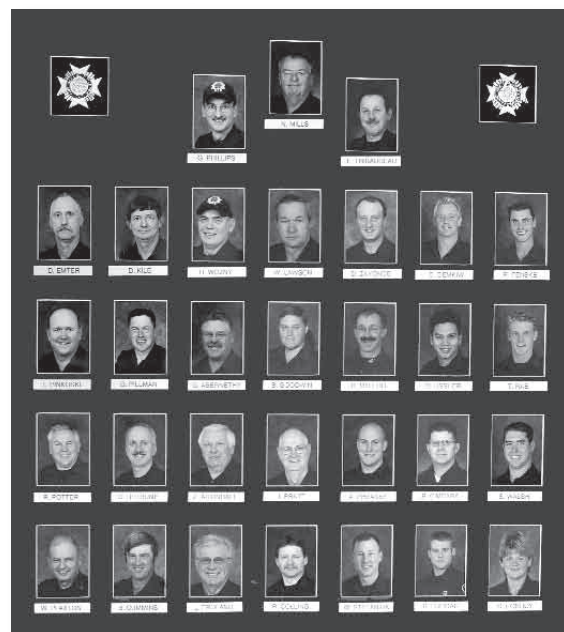
Fire Chief: Norrie Mills

Strength: 31 civilian firefighters,

Calls: Average of 150 calls per year, which include structural, ambulance, tent and vehicle, standby for aircraft and range fires,

Jurisdiction: 268 square miles,

Equipment: Two 1,200 gallons per minute pumpers, three 6,000 litre crash trucks for aircraft rescue, two 500 gallon range firefighter vehicles and one 1,000 gallon tanker.



The staff of CFB Wainwright's Fire Department.

Table 1. Fire Losses on Canadian Forces Bases located in Alberta, for 2001-05

Base	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	Losses (\$)
Cold Lake	4	0	1	300
Edmonton	7	0	0	32,026
Wainwright	13	0	0	15,750
Suffield	2	0	0	9,187
Total	26	0	1	57,254

The major causes of fire were as follows: space heaters (7 fires), cooking equipment (5), electrical including lamps/bulbs (4) and smoker's material (4).

Source: Luc Page, Fire Prevention & Statistic Co-ordinator, Canadian Forces, Fire Marshal, Ottawa

"Additionally, with the Hercules transport planes and helicopter traffic in and out of the Wainwright base, we also train for and conduct a unique structural aircraft rescue," said Mills.

The Edmonton Garrison Fire Department also responds to a wide range of calls. However, in addition to their firefighting duties, they are also responsible for conducting twice a year fire inspections at armories and cadet

camps throughout Alberta, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

All four bases also have mutual aid agreements or memorandums of understanding to provide firefighting services as needed with their surrounding communities. All four bases also run their department 24/7 to ensure that fire protection and emergency response is available at all times.

In addition to daily training and responding to calls, the fire departments also conduct regular preventative measures. These measures include providing fire extinguisher training to every person on the base and conducting home inspections for new personnel.

"Each new family on the base gets a home visitation," said Fire Chief Binnie. "We walk through the house with the family, pointing out and examining the smoke detectors and checking out the basement storage to ensure that there are no potential fire threats. As well, everyone on the base gets 'hands on' fire extinguisher training every two to three years."

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Members of the CFB Edmonton Fire Department during a training exercise.

...continued from page 23

The bases also conduct fire prevention awareness and education activities during Fire Prevention Week. Both the Edmonton Garrison and Cold Lake make presentations to the military schools in their area in addition to several fire drills per day, fire extinguisher training and Fire Prevention Week displays. Suffield also conducts fire drills and fire extinguisher training, and Wainwright has a fire inspector who co-ordinates Fire Prevention Week activities as well as fire inspections on the base.

When asked about the most devastating fire in recent history, each fire chief could quickly recount an incident. "For us, it was a fire at Blessed Sacrament School in the Town of Wainwright," stated Mills. "The town's fire department was the first responder but quickly requested our assistance. As per our mutual aid agreement, we got there as quickly as possible."

At Suffield, a half-million dollar residential block fire was a significant event, as was a major dust storm on the TransCanada Highway that resulted in an 11 vehicle collision with four deaths. "As the only full-time fire department in the county, we are often called to assist when major events occur," added Binnie.

Edmonton Garrison's CWO Shand recalls three major calls – a mid air collision involving two Hercules in the 1980s that resulted in 10 people being killed, another Hercules crash on base killing all on board and a military housing unit having a gas explosion killing a number of the occupants. There have been others but over the past 50 years, they seem to fade with time, as personnel were posted out or retired from the military.

Although Fire Chief Melvin has only been there since mid August, he recalls a CF-18 collision that took place 18 months ago at the Primrose Lake Evaluation Range, where the pilot was killed. More recently, a 15-acre forest fire this summer kept the base firefighters busy.

The military has been known for its ability to help out wherever it's needed, and the military's firefighters are no exception. Whenever and wherever the call comes, firefighters are prepared and ready to respond. That holds true for outside of Alberta too.

"One of our firefighters is in Afghanistan now, helping out the troops stationed at Kandahar," said Shand. "As military personnel, we go wherever we are posted, whether that's across Canada, around the world or at sea." 🔥



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

