

Alberta FIRE NEWS

August 2003

Vol. 24 Number 2

Inaugural medal ceremony honours dedicated emergency personnel

The inaugural presentation of the Alberta Emergency Services Medal took place May 15 at the Alberta Legislature. Approximately 600 guests attended the ceremony, including Alberta Premier Ralph Klein and more than 300 medal recipients.



Due to the large number of recipients, the Alberta Emergency Services Medal was presented to one representative from each of the eight disciplines being honoured. All other recipients were asked to stand and be formally recognized by attaching their medals at the same time as their discipline representative received his/her medal.

The representatives of the eight disciplines were:

Alberta Fire Service

George Derry, Crossfield Fire Department

Search and Rescue

Kevin George accompanied by dog Shaka, Search and Rescue Dog Association of Alberta

Emergency Medical Services

Darlene Bouwsema, Edmonton Emergency Response Department

EMA (Emergency Management Alberta)

Sharon Robins

Fire Service Dispatch

Arlyn Greig, Fort McMurray Fire Department

Certified Emergency Medical Dispatch

Darrel Payne, Edmonton Emergency Response Department

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Bruce McGregor

Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office

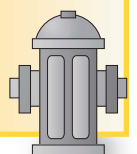
Ed Pomerleau

In this issue

Blood Reserve fire service protects	2
GPS improving fire response	3
Thermal imaging to prevent wildfires	4
How new WCB legislation impacts volunteer ...	4
Update on Risk Watch	6
How to guard against lawsuits	7
Meth labs	8
Calgary designated safe community twice	9
First Nations fire poster winners	12
New initiatives at fire etc.	13
Changing the way of doing business	14
Beaumont fire member wins	15
Putting fire power to the test	16
You were asking	17
Thanks for all you do!	17
Preparing for Fire Prevention Week 2003	18
Understanding NFPA Standards	18
Digest	19

...continued on page 10

Alberta
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS



First Nations fire service protects the Blood Reserve

One of the most difficult tasks for an EMT (ambulance attendant) is arriving at the scene of an emergency involving a family member or friend in crisis, but that's often what happens on the Blood Reserve in southern Alberta. According to Peter Laverock, EMT-P, Director of Emergency Services for the Blood Tribe Department of Health, the Blood Reserve is in a unique position.

"With most emergency response organizations, you are responding to someone in the community where you live, but luckily that often doesn't involve dealing with someone in your family or a close friend. Taking on the responsibility of responding to a crisis involving family or friends is very unusual, but in order for the Blood Tribe to deliver emergency services from within the community, that is exactly what our members do with many of their calls," said Laverock. "To my knowledge, we are the only First Nations community that uses primarily First Nations people for ambulance response within its community. In fact, of our 16 full-time positions, aboriginals hold 13 positions."

Laverock is a former Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) instructor in the Paramedic Program. When he began working with the Blood Tribe in November 1991, his primary mandate was to enable emergency services delivery to be managed and performed by community members.

In his first year on the reserve, Laverock prepared an EMT-A (Emergency Medical Technician Ambulance) program that he delivered in a classroom setting (rather than a correspondence-type of learning). From there, Laverock garnered outside help for the practical aspects of the training. "EMT-A levels of training, or

higher, require practicum experience, so we arranged for practicums through a number of organizations that agreed to help," said Laverock. "Aside from being mandatory, the practicums provide valuable experience for our team and, in particular, Calgary Emergency Medical Services, Foothills Hospital, Rocky View Hospital, Peter Loughheed Hospital, Lethbridge Regional Hospital and the Lethbridge Fire Department have been instrumental in allowing our people to train with them."

"Working with our fire chief, Denis Chief Calf EMT-A/FE, we have cross-trained all of our ambulance people to become firefighters," added Laverock. Since joining the Blood Reserve, Laverock says that 10 firefighters have gone through the Emergency Medical Responder training and 15 have completed the EMT-A training. "We just graduated our first EMT-Paramedic level staff and hope to graduate a second one later this year," he added. The EMT-P training is provided as an outreach program through SAIT and another three staff are applying to take EMT-Paramedic training in the next couple of years.

Blood Reserve basics

The Blood Reserve is the largest land reserve in Canada, outside of the reorganization of what was formerly the Northwest Territories. Covering almost 400,000 acres, the reserve is bordered by three rivers and the following communities:

Fort McLeod | Lethbridge | Cardston | Glenwood


Population – 9,800

Ambulance calls – 2,000 per year

Fire-related calls including off-reserve responders – 300 per year

Equipment

- three ambulances (two outfitted to Advanced Life Support level)
- one pumper truck
- two grass response fire trucks
- one water tanker
- one rescue trailer with "Jaws of Life"

The Blood Tribe Emergency Services has also been developing a number of ambulance response improvements, many of which are being used by other communities in Alberta. For example, many communities have adopted the ambulance statistics/billing program (AmbuStats) that was originally created for Blood Tribe Ambulance in 1995. As well, the protocols that Laverock developed for medical guidelines for ambulance use, which have been revised and kept up-to-date by members of the Blood Tribe Emergency Services, are also being used by a number of the ambulance services in southern Alberta. "We try to keep on the cutting edge wherever we can and share it with others," added Laverock. 



New technology improving fire response

In northern Alberta, the acquisition of new technology has had a major impact on both the safety and response capability of fire service members. The Municipal District of Mackenzie has three fire departments under the auspices of the Mackenzie Regional Emergency Services (Fort Vermilion Fire and Rescue, La Crete Fire and Rescue and Zama Fire and Rescue) two contracted fire services (High Level Fire Department and Rainbow Lake Fire Department) as well as Enforcement Services plus contract Emergency Medical Services, which all have established Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking for their emergency vehicles.

When originally reviewing the GPS technology for tracking their grader equipment, the Municipal District of Mackenzie also realized that it would be a tremendous asset for emergency services. As a result, the M.D. approved equipping all the main response units in the municipality.

"This equipment has made an enormous difference for us," said Rodney Schmidt, fire chief for High Level. "Within our large response area, some residences are tucked away in corners, and through the GPS we're able to locate the property right down to where the houses and driveways are located."

Schmidt says that the fire department is really impressed with the equipment and is also exploring adding other features. "The more we use it the more we learn," said Schmidt, "and we're currently talking about adding water supply locations to the program too. That will be a huge resource when putting out fires in remote locations."

Paul Driedger, Director of Planning, Emergency and Enforcement Services for the Municipal District of Mackenzie, says the thrust behind the purchase of the equipment was the M.D.'s large

geographical area. "Our jurisdictional boundary covers about 12 per cent of Alberta and includes a lot of large rural areas," said Driedger. "By purchasing this equipment, we are able to pinpoint where the emergency is and ensure a quicker and more effective response route for the emergency response units. This helps in dealing with emergency situations more efficiently, and it also increases safety for our personnel. During a response, we are able to determine the exact location of each unit responding, the speed it is travelling and its distance to the incident."



One example of a global positioning system

"Through a municipal sponsorship grant from Alberta Municipal Affairs, we were able to cover the capital costs of this equipment," added Driedger. "We've installed the equipment in our emergency and rescue vehicles and our command units all have laptop computers. We type in the legal land description and the computer automatically goes to the location and shows both the roads and the type of roads that lead to the location. The laptops also enable communication to go back and forth, which helps with our rescue efforts too."

Driedger says the M.D. also purchased four additional units that are portable. "This enables us to lend a unit to a contractor working for us, such as a water hauler, when responding to water rescues with our rescue boats. The equipment enables him to easily find the location."

Another added benefit is safety of personnel. "When our enforcement personnel work alone, the technology enables them to notify dispatch when they're dealing with a situation," added Driedger. "Through the use of a timer, the dispatcher is able to determine whether an officer is possibly in need of assistance."

Another fire department that has incorporated global positioning technology is the Rocky View Fire Service. Rocky View obtained the portable version of the GPS equipment last year. There are four portable units, which are about the size of the larger cell phones. Each of the four stations has one unit, which is put in the command vehicle when going to a call. Rocky View hopes to eventually have vehicle-mounted GPS and AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) systems installed in the primary response units.

Both MacKenzie and Rocky View indicate the technology is especially beneficial in responding to remote locations. Almost as soon as Rocky View received the equipment, it was put to good use in responding to a call about a young child involved in a quadding accident in a remote area. With the GPS unit, Rocky View was able to bring STARS air ambulance right to the remote spot. Many believe the equipment paid for itself right there.

Both municipalities can also see a real benefit of the equipment in rural wildland firefighting, especially in terms of linking up with and communicating with other fire departments and in how they work with forest fires. 🔥

Thermal imaging to prevent wildfires

The County of Thorhild is trying out a thermal imaging unit and may consider purchasing one if testing proves that it can prevent a wildfire. The handheld \$22,000 machine provides visibility in smoke or darkness, can find overloaded electrical plug-ins or hot spots in brushpiles, locate ground fires, show changes of temperature in material (such as propane) inside tanks, and track spilled materials (if they float) on lakes or creeks. The machine is already in use by some firefighters to find victims in smoke-filled



A thermal imaging camera in action

buildings, find the way out of buildings, and points of origin in pipe bomb blasts. The Thorhild Fire Department tried out the equipment during a training exercise in March with positive results. "Even in total blackness, a person with the unit could see other people, powerlines and anything else with a temperature higher or lower than its surroundings," said fire coordinator Rick Ennis.

Volunteer firefighters are covered when injured on the job

How new WCB legislation impacts volunteer firefighters

New legislation passed last April ensures that Alberta's professional firefighters get automatic compensation if they develop cancers commonly associated with their work. Donna Chimko, Account Manager with the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta, has provided the following article on what the new legislation means for volunteer firefighters.

Many of you have expressed concern about how you, as volunteer firefighters, will be treated by the workers' compensation system now that certain cancers have been enshrined in legislation for your full-time firefighting counterparts.

While it is true that volunteer firefighters are not granted presumptive association in the new legislation, the most notable



**Workers'
Compensation
Board**

Alberta

detail enshrined in Bill 202 is that it sets parameters around length of employment before an "automatic" link to a specific cancer is made. For instance, a full-time firefighter has to have worked fighting urban fires for a 20-year minimum if he or she has kidney cancer.

The legislation reads: "...presumption applies to a full-time member ...for a period prescribed by the Lieutenant Governor... who has been regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene, other than a forest fire scene, throughout that period."

The legislation is worded that way because medical research supports the relationship between those cancers and that degree of exposure. If, as a volunteer, you have the same degree of exposure, you could be entitled to the same benefits.

The legislation, and the fact volunteer firefighters are not named in it, does not mean you would be treated significantly differently from your full-time firefighting colleagues if you ever developed cancer through your work or suffered an on-the-job injury. We would ask questions about the types of fires, the frequency of



firefighting, and any risk factors that are not compensated (e.g., whether or not you are or were a smoker).

We do not ask firefighters to cite the exact fire or fires that caused the cancer. Exposure has to happen over a fairly long period of time. The information we are looking for is general and not a fire-by-fire history. We do not expect anyone to have that information available.

Volunteer firefighters are covered by the WCB

Our mandate is clear. In all mandatory industries, a worker (volunteer, part-time or full-time) that is injured in the course of his or her job is covered by workers' compensation.

The same is true if you contract an occupational disease from your workplace. You are covered by workers' compensation. However, if you have anxiety about the possible risk of volunteer firefighting and cancer, your best source of information is your doctor.

Should you be diagnosed with work-related cancer, contact the WCB for assistance. We are committed to giving your claim the attention and care it deserves.

WCB questions about claims

When a claim is filed with the WCB, we do ask questions. We look at the facts and sometimes ask for more information about the person's job history or medical records. As the neutral administrators of Alberta's

workers' compensation system, we try to make the link between the job and the medical condition.

Naturally, since the nature of your work is part-time and the exposure and frequency of actual firefighting would vary from firefighter to firefighter, we would have to ask some questions about the nature and frequency of the fires that were fought. For instance, we would want to know the types of fires, you worked on—whether they were grass fires or residential/commercial fires, where there is a significantly higher risk of exposure to toxic materials. And since most cancers develop over a period of five to 10 years, we would ask about your firefighting history from several years back. Obviously, if you fought a single grass fire a year or a toxic fire every two weeks, we would need to know that information.


We are committed to making decisions on cancer claims from all of our firefighters quickly. The WCB has a dedicated team of case managers who take care of firefighters' claims.

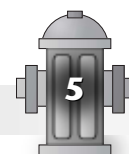
Fast turn-around times

In 75 per cent of the WCB's occupational disease claims, all the information is gathered and decisions are made within 60 days. In cases where there is a strong link between an occupation and a particular disease, such as one of the presumptive cancers that have been directly tied to firefighting, decisions are made even more quickly.

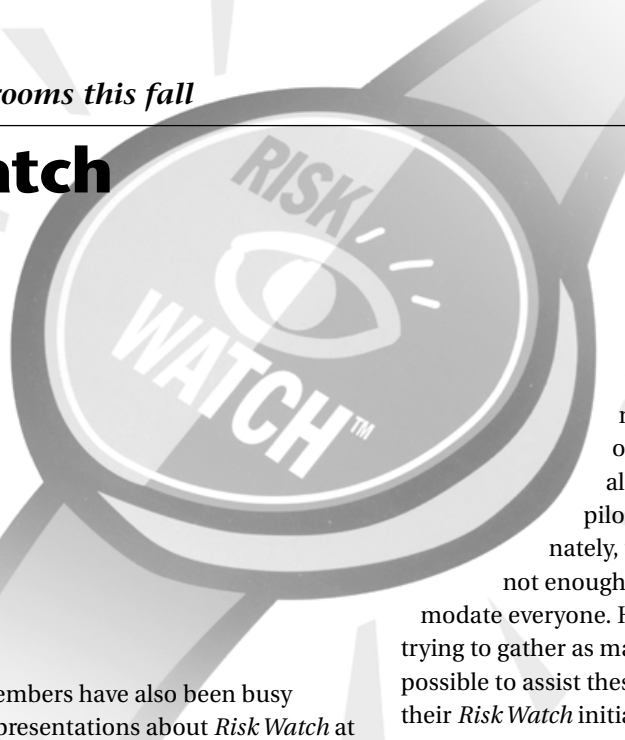
A little-known fact is that the WCB accepts 98 per cent of all claims. The two per cent of injury claims that do not qualify for coverage are for injuries that did not happen on the job or where there is no information available.\

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on-the-job injury.*

In the December edition of Alberta Fire News, watch for Donna's story on WCB wage loss benefits. She'll explain how the WCB determines the benefits each claimant is entitled to, with a special focus on volunteer firefighters and what they can expect when they file a claim. 



Update on Risk Watch Implementation Network activities



The Risk Watch Champion Management Team has been busy since its return from Boston in March. To fulfill the agreement with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to pilot 100 classrooms in five communities, team members have been in contact with many organizations. According to Dave McKenna, things are going extremely well with the communities that have stepped up to the plate, formed coalitions and committed to the pilots. "The communities are as excited about *Risk Watch* for their communities as we are to provide the program for them," said McKenna.

Team members have also been busy making presentations about *Risk Watch* at several teachers' conventions, including the City of Calgary Teachers' Convention Association, Palliser School Division and the Alberta Colony Educators Conference.

The team has had many requests from organizations that also want to provide pilot classes. Unfortunately, there currently are not enough resources to accommodate everyone. However, the team is trying to gather as many binders as possible to assist these organizations with their *Risk Watch* initiatives. 🔥

If you have any spare binders that you are willing to relinquish (at no cost), please contact Dave McKenna at (780) 827-3999 or e-mail: gcfcd@telusplanet.net

Team members have generally stayed in their respective regions for the pilot classes and have been supported by Tim Vandenbrink and other team members. In-service training sessions for teachers piloting *Risk Watch* will take place in the different regions at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.

Listed below are the five communities participating in the pilot, with the team-member contact following. Members of the local fire departments are also involved for each of the communities.

- **Grande Yellowhead School Division** (Dave McKenna)
- **Red Deer** (Ken McMullen)
- **Lethbridge** (Ken McMullen)
- **St. Paul and Bonnyville** (Jan deLeeuw and Ken Fuhrmann)
- **Camrose** (Jan deLeeuw and Ken Fuhrmann)

The translation and Canadianization of Risk Watch

Risk Watch, the comprehensive injury prevention program developed by the NFPA, has gained increasing support and use across Canada and in Alberta schools since its introduction in 1998. As a result, *Risk Watch* is being translated into French and revised to ensure the materials and topics addressed are Canadian in content. The goal is to see *Risk Watch* recognized nationally as an effective and user-friendly program in schools that is instrumental in reducing preventable injuries and deaths among children in Canada.

The Canadianization of *Risk Watch* was initiated with a contract between NFPA and the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council, which in turn has

contracted SMARTRISK to carry out the work. The project is funded by the Ontario Fire Marshal, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office and the National Fire and Life Safety Foundation.

Founded in 1992, SMARTRISK is an independent, national, non-profit organization dedicated to preventing injuries and saving lives. It has become one of the leading injury prevention groups in Canada and enjoys international recognition and support. SMARTRISK founder, paediatric surgeon Dr. Robert Conn, realized that far more lives could be saved through prevention than through surgery and rehabilitation.

SMARTRISK has created various committees to provide input and oversee the steps required to Canadianize *Risk Watch*. Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe (780-415-0546) will represent Alberta on the National Reference Group. Also from Alberta, Tim Vandenbrink is serving on the Coalition Ad-Hoc Committee and Jan deLeeuw is serving on the Teachers' Ad-Hoc Committee.

Until the project is completed, new users of *Risk Watch* are encouraged to use the existing binders, currently available for purchase through the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (403-357-9011).



How to guard against lawsuits

Municipalities provide fire service to their citizens and ratepayers. Insurers can sue fire departments to recover all or a portion of claim costs if and when there is any indication that the fire department may have erred. The most obvious example is when a fire rekindles after it is thought to be out.

How is fire department negligence established?

- The courts will attempt to measure the performance of the fire department against standard operating practices that are either published or commonly accepted within the fire community.
- Paid departments are likely to be held to higher standards than volunteer departments, but do not rely on this as the law and public expectations are changing.
- Once a municipality has established a fire service, its citizens have a reasonable expectation that the service provided will be effective.

How to protect your fire service from liability

- Properly worded and current fire bylaws, policies and defined operating procedures can be effective as a line of defence in a court of law. Ensure your bylaws, policies and procedures match your department's capabilities and

document rationale behind providing the level of service agreed to. Establish bylaws in consultation with legal representatives.

- Personnel selection is important. Your staff should be made up of members who are committed to the task. They need to have the skills and ability to do the job whether paid or volunteer. They need to have the desire to improve upon their skills.
- Review the capabilities of the fire department based on equipment, personnel and training. If certain fire exposures in the community are not within those capabilities, establish policies to deal with those specific situations and communicate these to the affected property owners.
- Review and update standard operating procedures on an ongoing basis.
- Review dispatch procedures. Record incoming telephone calls and inform callers of any possible delays.
- Conduct regular training programs and update them to current industry practices. We are fortunate to have access to one of the top training facilities in North America within our province, *fire etc.* at Vermilion.
- Check regularly to ensure that all equipment is in good repair. Document the results of the equipment checks.

- Check regularly to ensure that hydrants are kept clear, especially from snow in winter, and that they are operational. Again, documentation is required.
- Have a communications plan and a designated person to deal with the media. Instruct all firefighters, except the designated spokesperson, to refer media to the spokesperson.
- Document all call-outs, including false alarms. In a large or serious loss, record every pertinent detail as soon as possible. Also, take photographs and get statements from the property owner, the person reporting the fire and witnesses.
- Keep your insurer informed of your activities.
- Ensure mutual aid agreements are understood by all parties including dispatchers, and that they reflect current conditions. Draft any agreement in consultation with your legal representatives.
- Clearly define policies with respect to alcohol consumption after practices.
- Have the fire department conduct regular familiarity tours of all buildings within your area that are large, or would present unusual problems.
- Implement a policy dealing with how long the fire department will remain at the fire scene after a fire is extinguished. Use a release form to give to the property owner when turning control of the property back to them with specific instructions as to what to do to secure such property. This may not be feasible if the owner is absent or distressed.
- Monitor "Information Central," the electronic bulletin board service coordinated by the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association for current industry developments. 🔥



The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office, and *Fire etc.* will provide helpful guidelines and comments on how a fire department should operate. Please contact them if you need more information.

What first responders need to know about meth labs

The growing prevalence of methamphetamine production facilities has become a serious concern for first responders and is a growing concern in Alberta, especially in terms of health and safety and environmental issues. This is a brief overview of the drug's production in illegal labs, its potential effects on human health and a discussion of response issues, including staff safety and lab identification.

Methamphetamine is a man-made amphetamine produced and sold illegally in the form of pills, powder or chunks. It affects the central nervous system with effects similar to those of adrenaline, but longer lasting. It is extremely addictive.

Meth labs have been discovered in neighbourhoods in every level of society and production facilities have been located in a diverse range of facilities—hotels, motels, restaurants, barns, private homes and apartments, storage facilities, fields, vacant buildings and even vehicles. The labs can be small enough to fit in a backpack or suitcase, or large enough to fill a commercial warehouse.

Methamphetamine is made or "cooked" from common, easily available materials using one of several basic processes. All meth recipes start with over-the-counter cold medication as the base and then, depending on the recipe used, can include combinations of volatile organic chemicals, acids, bases, metals, solvents and salts.



Cold Remedies



Chemicals



Apparatus

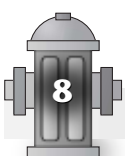
If you see large amounts of these products or their packaging in unusual places, a meth lab could be close by.

What are the signs?

Generally, there are a few clues that indicate the presence of a meth lab. When responding to a location, the presence of any of the following may point to a lab on the premises:

- Covered or blacked-out windows
- Burn pits, stained soil or dead vegetation indicating dumping of chemicals or waste
- Waste in trash pits or piles, such as:
 - Packaging from over-the-counter ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine cold pills
 - Empty containers of antifreeze, naphtha, ether, starting fluids, Freon, lye or drain openers, paint thinner or alcohol
 - Compressed gas cylinders or camp-stove containers
 - Packaging from Epsom salts or rock salt
 - Anhydrous ammonia tanks or propane cylinders
 - Pyrex/glass/Corning containers or other kitchen glassware with hoses or duct tape attached
 - Respirator masks, gloves, dust masks, funnels, hoses and clamps
- Coffee filters, pillow cases or bed sheets stained red or containing a white powdery residue
- Apartments or buildings that smell like chemicals, including bitter, sweet, ammonia or solvent smells

All of the above will be in unusual locations or quantities.



Meth recipes are readily available from other “cooks” and from the Internet. In fact, there are literally hundreds of chemicals and substances that may be used in the production of this narcotic. In addition to creating a drug with possibly unwanted side effects, the varying combinations of chemicals may also produce fire and explosion risks, toxic gases and chemicals.

The potential health effects of exposure to meth lab chemicals depend on the lab process and chemicals used, the amount of chemical and length of exposure, and the age and health of the person exposed. Chemicals can be breathed, eaten or

absorbed through the skin. As a first responder, if you suspect you have located a meth lab, personal protection, including gloves and respiratory protection, as well as clothing that protects the eyes and skin from chemicals, are essential.

If you think you may have found an illegal drug lab (see sidebar for possible clues), follow these steps:

- Notify local law enforcement officers and hazardous materials responders immediately.
- Do not enter the area of the suspected lab.
- Back out immediately if you have inadvertently entered a lab.

- Do not interfere with the cooking process, chemicals or equipment, as these processes are potentially unstable and could explode.
- Do not touch anything. Don't even turn out lights or unplug equipment.
- Ensure that anyone who has entered the building or been exposed to the chemicals is decontaminated and assessed by medical professionals. 🔥

NOTE: RCMP K Division in Edmonton has produced a poster that provides a visual overview of meth-lab paraphernalia.

If you would like a copy, please contact: Sergeant Ian Sanderson, Drug Awareness Services, K Division Headquarters, Phone (780) 412-5461

Alberta and Ontario lead Canada in safe communities

Calgary designated safe community twice

The City of Calgary recently received two designations attesting to the safety of the city. It was awarded the designation of a Safe Community by the World Health Organization (WHO), making it one of only three North American cities to achieve this status. It also received a similar award from the national Safe Communities Foundation.

Safe Communities Foundation



Dedicated to making Canada the safest Country in the world to live, learn, work and play

Other communities in Canada have also been recognized for safety programs and activities that have made a difference for their residents including:

- Fort McMurray, Alberta
- Brockville, Ontario
- Rainy River, Ontario
- Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Those communities hoping to receive recognition as a safe community need to apply and illustrate how they meet stringent criteria. The International Safe

What makes a safe community?

According to WHO, there are six key indicators needed for a city to be considered as a safe community. They are:

- An infrastructure based on partnerships and collaborations, governed by a cross-sectional group that is responsible for safety promotion in the community.
- Long-term, sustainable programs covering both genders and all ages, environments and situations.
- Programs that target high-risk groups, and environments and programs that promote safety for vulnerable groups.
- Programs that document the frequency and cause of injuries.
- Evaluation measures to assess programs, processes and the effects of change.
- Ongoing participation in national and international safe communities networks.



“Andy the Ambulance” and a first responder talk to a youngster about safety.

Community designations are adjudicated for WHO by the social medicine division of a Stockholm-based medical university and research centre called the Karolinska Institute. Inspectors from the institute travel to prospective sites that apply for designation and evaluate a wide range of safety programs. 🔥

If you are interested in finding out more about the International Safe Communities designation or how to apply, go the Karolinska Institute's web site at www.phs.ki.se/csp/safecom/default.htm. For information on the national Safe Communities Foundation go to www.safecommunities.ca.



Laird Burton, President of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (second from left), watches the ceremony with his colleagues

Alberta Premier Ralph Klein pins a medal on Bruce McGregor, representative for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development



Recognition well deserved



Royal Canadian Artillery Band



...continued from cover

Inaugural medals ceremony honours dedicated emergency personnel

"This medal recognizes the dedication of our emergency services personnel and shows how much all Albertans appreciate their courage and compassion."

– Guy Boutilier, Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs

Premier Klein (centre), Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier (far left), and Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham (far right) celebrate with recipients from the Fort McMurray Fire Department

Minister Guy Boutilier thanks emergency personnel for their important contributions to safety in Alberta



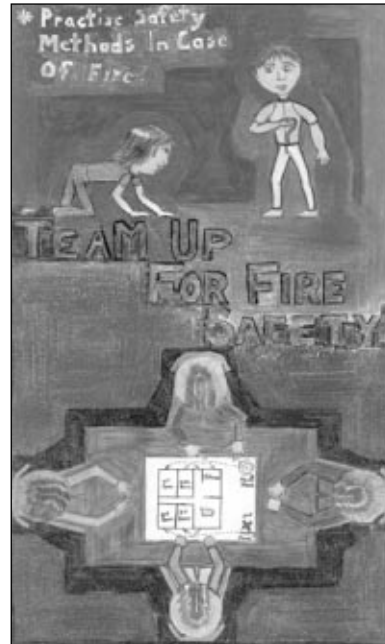
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Regional fire poster winners do well at nationals

This year, three Alberta region winners of a fire prevention art contest held annually in First Nations schools advanced to the national level where they did very well.



Olivia John



Raven Semagnis (centre)

and at nationals in the grade 3 to 6 category. As well, Raven Semagnis won first place in the Alberta region and received an honourable mention at the national level for the Kindergarten to Grade 3 category.



Dakota Lightning

In the grade 7 to 9 category, Olivia John won first place in both the Alberta region and at nationals. Olivia is from the Kehewin Cree Nation 123

(near Bonnyville) and is the sister of last year's national winner, Ernest John Jr.

Dakota Lightning from the Enoch Reserve, won first place in both the Alberta region

All three students received several prizes. The two national winners received a plaque and \$500 plus an expense-paid trip to the National All-Native Firefighters' Competition on August 23, 2003 in Kelowna, British Columbia. Representing Alberta at the competition is Muskawchees Fire Department of the four nations in Hobbema. 🔥

New initiatives at fire etc.

To keep you informed about activities at *fire etc.*, here are some of the most recent initiatives taking place.

After-hours helpline

Fire etc. has launched an after-hours helpline (1-866-262-0278) for municipalities and distance-learning students. Initially, the line will be staffed from 5 to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays with plans to eventually operate the line 24 hours a day, seven days a week, said CEO Don Gnatiuk.

"A lot of departments train during the evenings, and with the extended phone hours they will be able to contact us and get an answer immediately to any questions about training or the material they're studying," explained Wayne Girven, Director of Operations.

Strategizing

Monthly meetings between the Fire Commissioner's Office and *fire etc.* are another recent development. "We're committed to sitting down together and strategizing the key issues facing Alberta's municipal fire service," says Gnatiuk. "Both organizations are taking a proactive approach."

Information sessions

Fire etc. managers are continuing to hold information sessions with fire departments in locations around the province. The goal is to hear departments' concerns and their expectations for service and support from *fire etc.* over the next three to five years.

"We hope every department can be represented at a meeting in its region," says Gnatiuk. "We want that input so we can plan with their needs in mind."

Firefighter courses

Fire etc. continues to schedule a variety of courses that are of interest to firefighters across Alberta, such as:

Safety Codes Officer Training Initiative 2003-04 Program

Building Construction and Protection Systems

Okotoks, September 8-11, 2003

Properties of Materials

Red Deer, October 6-9, 2003

Fire Origin and Cause Determination

County of Grande Prairie,
September 29-October 2, 2003
Edson, November 3-6, 2003



fire etc.

Drumheller, December 8-11, 2003
Stettler, January 12-15, 2004
High River, February 23-26, 2004
MD of Rocky View, March 8-11, 2004

Alberta Codes and Standards

Beaumont, October 20-23, 2003
Taber, November 24-27, 2003
Rocky Mountain House,
January 26-29, 2004

The Safety Codes Officer Training Initiative (SCOTI) is designed to offer relevant and affordable training, in the most available manner possible, to municipalities where Alberta Municipal Affairs has traditionally offered its services. The program is delivered in rural locations to minimize travel time and costs to participants.

SCOTI courses are available to members of municipal volunteer fire departments in Alberta who wish to become certified or to upgrade their certification as a safety codes officer in the fire discipline. This program is jointly sponsored through a partnership of the Safety Codes Council, *fire etc.*, and Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Two courses offered this year form part of the common requirements for both Level I Inspector and Investigator certification: Building Construction and Protection Systems, and Properties of Materials. They have been scheduled to assist individuals who may have missed previous offerings of the common courses.

Applications must be received 10 days prior to the commencement of a course. There is no tuition cost, however, applicants are responsible for their own expenses for accommodations, meals and travel. 🔥

For information about any of these courses or to register, please contact *fire etc.* at 1-888-863-2387 or (780) 853-5800 or email registrar@fire-etc.ca. Also check out the web site at www.fire-etc.ca

Changing the way of doing business... *CONTINUED!*



Here is an overview of some of the continuing changes that are taking place in the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) to provide services and resources that meet the needs of Alberta's fire service.

Regional meetings provide input and guidance

Staff have been busy over the past few months hosting and attending regional meetings across the province to re-introduce the Fire Commissioner's Office and inform fire departments and municipalities of the new directions and initiatives the office has embarked upon. The input and feedback provided at these meetings are essential in developing programs that support the needs of fire departments and the FCO. Fire service personnel, elected officials and chief administrative officers are strongly encouraged to attend a meeting in their area. For a listing of meeting dates, times and locations, contact your regional fire safety officer or the FCO at the numbers at the end of this article.

After-hours phone number gaining in popularity

The toll-free after-hours access number is starting to be used much more frequently with both fire and police services across the province. The few minor technical problems that were first experienced have been resolved and the line is fully functioning. Call 1-877-427-8393 to reach a human voice and the assistance you require.

FCO Web site undergoing expansion

The Fire Commissioner's Office Web site is currently undergoing considerable change with the addition of a new feature: the Fire Department Operations page. Clicking on the button for this page will connect you to a wide range of forms, bylaws, information,

Keeping the FCO on track

As a wrap-up to our focus on personnel in the Fire Commissioner's Office, this issue we feature two of the administrative support staff—Neelu Jairath and Sarah Barter.

A 26-year employee of the Alberta Government, Neelu Jairath has worked in the Fire Commissioner's Office for the past four years. Prior to that, she worked in the branches of Electrical, Personnel and Building in what was formerly called Alberta



Neelu Jairath

Labour. Neelu's detailed focus is put to good use in dealing with the grants, budget and invoices that come into the Fire Commissioner's Office as well as the federal exemplary medals.

Sarah Barter joined the Fire Commissioner's Office in January 2001, after working for ATCO Electric for several years. Sarah says that while some of her responsibilities

are similar to her work at ATCO, there is a lot broader scope at the FCO. In addition to providing administrative support to the

Fire Commissioner, Sarah is also responsible for the distribution of promotional materials and display units and the details around the Alberta fire service medals.



Sarah Barter

Both Neelu and Sarah are cross-trained so that they can cover each other off as necessary. And like everyone else in the FCO, whenever required, they help out wherever they're needed!

technical documents and discussion papers dealing with the front-line operation of a fire department. Other features will include the Fire Department Operations Manual as well as the new Dwelling Unit Search and Seizure forms. We want to keep this section as current and useful as possible, so would appreciate your feedback on what should be included. To provide your comments, suggestions or contributions, please contact one of our regional fire safety officers, or call the FCO.

Inventory project gaining momentum

The Emergency Resources Inventory Project is proceeding well and we are developing the database system as we collect information. We are anticipating having the early parts of the system up and running later this year. Please keep in

mind that the inventory can only be effective with your assistance and input. If you haven't already submitted the inventory form, please take a few moments now to fill it out and send it in. The form can be obtained from the FCO Web site, the FCO or from your regional fire safety officer.




Ken McMullen, new Calgary fire safety officer

New fire safety officer in Calgary

Ken McMullen joined the FCO as the fire safety officer for the Calgary area. Ken comes to the FCO from the M.D. of Rocky View where he was the Fire Prevention Officer and more recently held the title of Executive Officer of

Operations. Ken is also a member of the province's Risk Watch Champion Team and he'll continue to promote *Risk Watch* in his new position.

Although many changes have and continue to take place at the FCO, our number one priority remains the same. We are committed to providing service, support, advice and assistance to the municipal fire service in Alberta. Stay in touch and let us know how we can serve you better. 

Fire safety officers:

Ross Bennett, Peace River,
(780) 624-6303

Frank Harris, Red Deer,
(403) 340-4987

Kevan Jess, Lethbridge,
(780) 381-5483

Ken McMullen, Calgary,
(403) 297-5798

Tom O'Gorman, Red Deer,
(403) 340-5162

Ed Pomerleau, Edmonton,
(780) 427-4854

Fire Commissioner's Office:
(780) 427-8392

Call 310-0000 to be connected to any of these numbers toll free.

Volunteering is her way of life

Beaumont fire member wins community service award

Ginette Traversy-Ens, member of the Beaumont Fire Service was this year's winner of the Philip Ki Joon Oh Scholarship Foundation Volunteers Award. The award was established by a Beaumont businessman in memory of his son to recognize outstanding volunteer service.


A tireless volunteer in her community, Traversy-Ens provides Beaumont with fire and medical coverage, teaches first-aid courses, organizes fundraising events, and spends countless evenings and weekends on fire and safety education endeavours. She has also worked hard to get the *Risk Watch* injury prevention program



Ginette Traversy-Ens accepts her award

into Beaumont schools. Traversy-Ens also puts in many hours on other volunteer commitments including Edmonton

Regional Search and Rescue, Kids Cancer Camp every summer, and ski trips, tours and other outings for the blind.

When accepting her award Traversy-Ens commented, "The way I see it, there are two things people can do. They can sit and complain or get involved to make peoples' lives better." It is obvious what her choice is. And, in typical style, Traversy-Ens has already decided to return the financial award back to the community through the development of a Junior Firefighter Program, something that she hopes to have ready within the next year. 

Putting fire power to the test



Nineteen teams competed in front of about 700 spectators for a total of \$10,500 in prizes.

First Place – Sundre Fire Department (\$5,000 gift certificate in merchandise from Phoenix Emergency and championship trophy from the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office). Presented by Phoenix Emergency, Superior Emergency, and Red Deer Bottling. The FCO's Ernie Polsom and Pat Graham (left) presented the trophy.



As part of the annual Westerner Days Fair in Red Deer, a new feature has been added for firefighters. Organized and presented by Westerner Park, the Alberta Fire Power Volunteer Fire Fighter Competition took place Sunday, July 20, 2003, the last day of the Westerner Days Fair. As the title implies, the competition is open only to volunteer firefighters. This is the first year for such a competition in Alberta, which was modeled after a competition of the same name in Saskatchewan.

According to Dave Harvey, competition chair and a senior captain with the County of Red Deer Volunteer Fire Department, the competition is limited to 20 teams of volunteer firefighters. "There are three different command-post scenarios that each team must complete. The four top-scoring teams at the end of the preliminaries then compete for over \$10,000 in prizes," said Harvey. 🔥

For more information about the Alberta Fire Power Competition, please contact Roxanne Warner at Westerner Park – (403) 309-0207.



Second Place – Winfield Fire Department (\$2,500 gift certificate in merchandise from Century Vallen) Presented by Dow Chemical Canada and Nova Chemicals



Third Place – Lacombe Fire Department (\$2,000 gift certificate in merchandise from Quatro Tec Service & Supply and Just-In Case Fire Ltd.) Presented by ENMAX Energy Corp., Quatro Tec, and Just-In Case Fire



Fourth Place – Ponoka Fire Department (\$1,000 gift certificate in merchandise from Acklands Grainger) Presented by Acklands Grainger



You were asking...

Q. Why does the fire authority having jurisdiction receive notification of kitchen fire suppression systems that are not being maintained?


A. The Alberta Fire Code is intended to maintain fire protection and life safety systems installed in buildings. Sentence 6.1.1.3. (4) ensures that agencies servicing fire protection equipment have an obligation under the Fire Code to inform the authority having jurisdiction of problem systems and equipment.



Ray Cox, Edmonton and Ray Ligenza, Calgary

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

Fire authorities should expect service agencies to report on owners who will not repair or maintain items such as portable fire extinguishers, automatic fire suppression systems, standpipe and hose systems, and fire alarm and

detection systems. The authority having jurisdiction should act on such notifications and communicate to the owner the requirements for equipment maintenance. 

6.1.1.3. Notification

4) Where a person who carries out the maintenance of a portable fire extinguisher, fire extinguishing system, fire alarm system or a fire alarm device discovers that the device or system is inoperative or defective and the owner or his authorized agent is unwilling or unable to correct the defect, the person carrying out the maintenance shall forthwith, in writing, notify the fire department and the owner or his authorized agent of that notification.

Battling forest fires all across the province

Thanks for all you do!



Once again, Alberta firefighters have come through for us this summer, battling blazes in the Crowsnest Pass area, Jasper, Sundre and all across the province. Thank you for your firefighting this summer and all year long. Your work is greatly appreciated.

Residents of the Crowsnest Pass area keep their eyes on the wildfire that evacuated residents and showed Alberta's firefighters at their best.

Photo taken by Sarah Anderson courtesy Crowsnest Pass Promoter

Preparing for Fire Prevention Week 2003

This year's Fire Prevention Week campaign takes place October 5 - 11 based on the theme: *When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!*


The focus of this year's campaign is reminding the public about the importance of getting out and staying out of buildings when fire happens. It aims to convey several life-saving ideas that the public needs to know or be reminded about including:

- the danger of fire and smoke
- rapid spread of fire and smoke in homes and other buildings
- how to plan and practise a fire escape plan so people can get out and stay out of danger
- fire exits
- how to call the fire department in an emergency
- smoke alarms as early warning devices for smoke or fire danger
- taking care of those who need assistance during fire emergencies, particularly children, the elderly and the disabled

This year's Fire Prevention Week campaign will be supported by the Fire Commissioner's Office in a number of ways:

- A Fire Prevention Week Campaign Kit, including Alberta fire statistics, municipal fire statistics, a feature article on the theme as well as related articles to support the theme, which will be distributed to fire departments and the media, and will also be posted on the Fire Commissioner's Office Web site in late August.
- A partnership with McDonald's Restaurants of Canada will once again provide colourful, newly-designed children's activity booklets to all participating fire departments. Both English and French versions of the booklet will be available.



- Media events during the week attended by the Fire Commissioner and his staff. 

For further information, please call Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner, at (780) 415-0546.

FCO fire safety officers can help


Understanding NFPA Standards

An issue that arises with some regularity in the fire service is that of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards, which seem to be ever changing, and the legal status that this large group of documents has in Alberta. These documents often create confusion in the minds of many municipal councils, chief administrative officers, and fire departments.

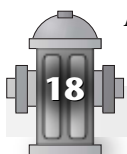
NFPA documents are not, by themselves, law in any jurisdiction. With the exception of the items referenced in the Alberta Building Code and Alberta Fire Code 1997, there is only one other NFPA standard that has any formal recognition within

Alberta's regulatory framework.



The consensus decision was that, at the time of sale, the requirements of the current version of either the "Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) 155.1 Standard" or the "National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1971 Standard" must be met for all "bunker" or "turnout" gear sold in Alberta. This means that all newly purchased gear must meet the current standard and shall be marked as such. If you are unsure as to what the current standard is, you can contact a regional fire safety officer of the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office at the numbers on page 15 of this newsletter. 

Article submitted by: Kevan Jess, Fire Safety Officer, FCO, Lethbridge



Digest



Clive Fire Department and Clive Public Works Department's new firehall



Opening celebration at the new firehall

Westlock supports Fire Safe House project

Westlock Town Council voted unanimously to contribute \$1,000 towards the \$45,000 Fire Safe House that Westlock County Fire Chief Glenn Latimer has been fundraising for. Latimer says the community has been extremely supportive of the fire-house project, and much of the contributions have come from service clubs, businesses and individuals. At time of writing, Latimer still needed \$10,000. The fire house is a recreational vehicle that's been adapted to teach children and adults how to get out of burning buildings and how to avoid fires.

Working Together

The Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office made a financial contribution to the Canadianization of the *Risk Watch* program (see sidebar on page 6). In a letter to Guy Boutilier, Alberta's Minister of Municipal Affairs, from Bernard A. Moyle, Chair, Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council in Ontario, Mr. Moyle acknowledge the FCO's contribution: "We are pleased and excited that your office has joined with us to enhance the Risk Watch program. Undoubtedly, the outcome of our efforts will be creating a future generation of safety conscious adults and a country that suffers far fewer preventable deaths and injuries."

New firehall for Clive

A new building is always a reason to celebrate and the Village of Clive celebrated in style for the opening of its new fire hall and public works shop.

The 650 square metre facility was designed to meet the needs of the Clive Fire Department and the Clive Public Works Department. In fact, the new building accommodates the village's current two fire trucks with space for one more when expansion of services take place plus it also contains adequate space to hold the village's public works vehicles.

Funding for the facility was provided through a grant from the Canada/Alberta Infrastructure Program and a municipal sponsorship grant from Alberta Municipal Affairs. The province provided \$90,200 for the project.

40+-year Blairmore firefighter remembered

Mr. Joseph John "Yugger" Yanota passed away suddenly at the Crowsnest Pass Health Care Centre on Monday May 26, 2003 at the age of 79 years. He was a proud member of the Blairmore Fire Department where he served for 41 years and earned the position of fire chief for seven years and deputy chief for 25 years. Members of the Blairmore fire department were honoured to be pallbearers.

Alberta Municipal Affairs funds training for fire service

Municipal Affairs has distributed \$450,000 to 171 Alberta municipalities for direct training to fire service personnel and educational materials for fire prevention programs. An additional \$50,000 was also provided to support the Safety Codes Officer Training Initiative, which provides fire-related courses to safety codes officers.



Jay Slem (Special Areas), Kerwin Cornelssen (Fire Chief) and Grant Carl (Mayor) show off the Consort Fire Department's new van

Consort gets new fire van

Jay Slem (Alberta Municipal Affairs), Kerwin Cornelssen (Consort's Fire Chief) and Grant Carl (Consort's Mayor) show off the Consort Fire Department's new van, which was purchased with \$122,000 grant from Municipal Affairs. The Village of Consort and Special Areas 2, 3 and 4 teamed up to submit a joint application for the funds to benefit their communities.



Alberta Fire News is published three times a year, by the Fire Commissioner's Office of Alberta Municipal Affairs, for the information of the fire service and others with an interest in fire protection. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Alberta Municipal Affairs or the Government of Alberta. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged. The contents of *Alberta Fire News* may be reproduced with the appropriate credit to the source. The editorial office of *Alberta Fire News* is located at:

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Medal makes a difference

I would like to share a story with you regarding a special presentation of the Alberta Emergency Services Medal to a very worthy recipient.



Andre Lidal, former Bon Accord fire chief

Fire Safety Officer Ed Pomerleau and I learned that a former fire chief of Bon Accord, Andre Lidal, was in hospital suffering from terminal cancer early in May. We went to visit him to offer such support as we could. He asked about what we were doing at the Fire Commissioner's Office, so we got on to the subject of the medal and preparations for the inaugural presentation. He mentioned that he would have had 12 years in, but he had to resign his post about 18 months ago to deal with the cancer. We had a pleasant visit and left.

The day of the provincial ceremony I was talking to the Municipal Affairs' Director of Communications and mentioned that I wished we could do something for Andre. He made the suggestion that we approach the Minister's office with the request for a special dispensation to award the medal. We did this and the Minister's office approved the awarding of the medal to Andre.

We were able to give the medal to Andre on May 16th. Ed Pomerleau and I visited the hospital with Andre's mother and his friend Gail. Andre, very sick at the time, was able to get out of bed and stand with us for a picture. To say he was surprised would be an understatement. In conversation with Gail, prior to giving him the medal, we were warned that he might not recognize us and that he had not been able to get out of bed for several days.

Unfortunately, Andre passed away on June 3, 2003. I had the honour of attending his memorial service. When I walked into the chapel, the first thing on display was a picture of Andre in his uniform, as well as his helmet and medal, beside his framed certificate. His best friend confided that we had made Andre very happy with the presentation of the medal. He had been struggling in the last few weeks of his life wondering if his contributions had been valuable.

"When I walked into the chapel, the first thing on display was a picture of Andre in his uniform, as well as his helmet and medal, beside his framed certificate."

The Alberta Emergency Services Medal is an important award that means a great deal to those who have earned it. I'm glad we were able to give it to Andre, a very deserving member of Alberta's fire service.

Ernie Polsom,
 Assistant Fire Commissioner-Operations