

Learning from experience

Last summer's massive fire in the Lost Creek area in the Crowsnest Pass, Alberta was one of the worst wildland fires in Alberta's history. Over 18,000 hectares burned as the fire threatened communities, industry and wildlife.

"It was the worst fire, with the best results," said John Irwin, Mayor for the Municipal District of Crowsnest Pass. "The fire consumed a huge area with a heavy fuel load, and there was a major impact on the community. Thankfully, though, no houses were lost and no injuries occurred."

The fire started July 23, 2003 near Cherry Hill (just south of the fire that occurred in 2000). Six days later, the fire had progressed to within a kilometre of the peak of Hillcrest Mountain; by August 2nd the entire wildland/urban interface areas were under severe threat. A state of local emergency was declared, and remained in effect until August 28th.

Much of the success behind controlling this fire is attributed to the combined efforts of the five Fire Protective Services units (four volunteer fire departments and the volunteer search and rescue squad) in the Crowsnest Pass working in conjunction with staff and contractors with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Nearly a year later, everyone involved with this incident is quick to point out that several factors contributed to the team's success, most importantly effective communication and good co-operation.

The Hillcrest Fire Department prepares for last summer's Lost Creek area fire in the Crowsnest Pass, one of the worst wildland fires in Alberta's history



In addition to conducting door-to-door warnings to inform residents that they may be evacuated and would be given

one hour's notice, fire department staff also advised residents how to clean out fire hazards around their properties and put sprinklers on their houses. All propane tanks were also removed from the affected areas and a natural gas line in the Hillcrest area was shut off.

"One of the things we learned was that if you all work together and communicate extremely

well, you can stand up to a fire and save your community," added Irwin. "But you're only successful if you put a lot of effort into it."

Jerry Newman, Hillcrest Fire Chief, agrees that the key to success was good



The Lost Creek fire came dangerously close to the businesses and homes of thousands of people

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communication among everyone. “In the past, we’ve worked mutually with other area fire departments and Sustainable Resource Development, so we already had a good working relationship. This played a large role in saving the structures in the area,” said Newman.

Equally important was the excellent cooperation between municipalities and Fire Protection Division staff, added Stew Walkinshaw, Fire Manager, Southern Rockies Wildfire Management Area. “It’s very important that we know who the fire chiefs are and that they know who we are. Additionally, setting up discussions early in the season on these types of incidents helps ensure that communications plans are in place and that there’s a good understanding of who has what equipment,” added Walkinshaw.

The assistance from nearby communities was another major contribution and communities stepped in wherever they were needed. Sparwood, B.C., the Town of Pincher Creek and the Municipal District (M.D.) of Pincher Creek all provided personnel and additional resources.

Lessons learned

- It is critical to have accurate information to properly assess the situation and the resources available.
- Need to assess the threat to the community as quickly and accurately as possible.
- Continual monitoring is a key factor as changes can occur rapidly.
- Good communication is absolutely vital.
- Daily meetings of the operation command (and more frequently as required).
- Need representation from all key organizations involved.
- Having a disaster plan and doing training and exercises on a regular basis really does pay off.



Photo taken by Sarah Anderson courtesy Crownsnest Pass Promoter

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

Interagency training and cross training was also a significant advantage. “No matter how much training you have, you can never have enough, especially in the Fire Operations in *Wildland Urban Interface Training* course,” added Walkinshaw. He also recommends that all municipalities key in on the *Fire Smart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire* program, a point concurred by Hillcrest’s fire chief. “By following the Fire Smart guidelines, we were able to save all our main structures. Our volunteers put up sprinkler systems and checked homes in outlying areas, put out spot fires that came near the town and had tankers up and around the perimeter of the town to rehydrate the area,” said Newman.

Dave Cox, a contractor with Sustainable Resource Development who provided industry liaison during the fire, said that one of the lessons learned from this fire is to always be prepared. “There are no guarantees with fire. However, following the Fire Smart program and industry guidelines, which include having significant structure protection in place, made a tremendous difference. Most

importantly, the Lost Creek fire serves as a reminder that we can never become complacent.”

While the fire was devastating to the area, it did have a silver lining in terms of bringing the communities even closer together. In fact, 867 community residents registered as volunteers in fire defense efforts.

“I was really impressed by the professionalism – super people, and the way they worked with everyone was great,” said John Irwin. “Equally impressive was the efforts from our communities. Lots of people had disruptions to their daily routines – both residents and businesses – but in the end everyone rallied around the importance of saving our communities and dousing out the fires.” 🔥



Note: Fire Smart program information is available through Wildfire Management or on the Partners in Protection web site at www.partnersinprotection.ab.ca

Calgary's new youth cadet program going well

In 2001, the Calgary Fire Department successfully held a week-long Aboriginal Fire Cadet Program for Aboriginal youth. The program was designed to assist these young people in acquiring an understanding of what's involved in becoming a firefighter and what steps they need to take to enter the profession.

According to Danny Freeman, Recruitment Coordinator, the cadet program was one of many recruitment efforts to reach out to under-represented communities in the greater Calgary area. "We are always looking for new ways to encourage young people to consider firefighting as a career choice. We have a regular cadet program that runs throughout the school year, but in working with the Métis Nation of Alberta, we decided to also try a week-long session in the summer geared specifically to Aboriginal youths," said Freeman. The first session attracted 12 students. The success of that program led to its continuation the following summer, and is planned again for 2004.



Participants with the Calgary Fire Department's Aboriginal Fire Cadet Program learn about a career in firefighting

Nicole Acuna



Nicole Acuna gets into her gear

Nicole Acuna is one of the Calgary Fire Department's Aboriginal Firefighter Cadet Program success stories. Not only was she one of the first – and incidentally the youngest – student involved, but she also switched from wanting to become a lawyer to wanting to become a firefighter as a result of her enrollment in the program. In fact, the one-week program spurred her on to follow up with ongoing and continuous training and studies. After completion of the cadet course in 2002, she then enrolled in the regular fire cadet program provided by the Calgary Fire Department. She graduated from Level 2 in November 2003 and started Level 3 in February 2004. This summer she will be working as a summer student with the Calgary Fire Department. When she turns 18 in two years, Nicole plans to compete to be a firefighter with the department.

"Nicole is a wonderful ambassador for youth today," said Freeman. "She is a very talented young person. She is outgoing, dedicated to her training and works very hard. I think she will make a great firefighter, and look forward to having her join our department in the future."

In addition to pursuing her training, Nicole also speaks to other youth about the program and what to expect in terms of training. Hopefully her involvement and her enthusiasm will help sustain the interest already generated in the Aboriginal Youth Fire Cadet Program.

According to Karen Acuna, mother of one of the first year's cadets, "the Calgary Fire Department offers an awesome training program. My daughter Nicole was so impressed that she is pursuing firefighting as her future career. She has already completed her Level 1 Cadet and is continuing with the next step of training." (See above for more information about Nicole.)

The program is intense admits Freeman. "We run the program for one full week, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Theory is taught in the mornings and the cadets are involved in hands-on activities in the afternoon. Students are exposed to various components of a firefighter's responsibilities, from live fire to vehicle extrication."

The program also has other benefits. "In addition to giving them a quick peek at

the career of firefighting and what kind of preparation work is required to become a firefighter, students also undergo some real citizenship learning and training. They soon realize that both citizenship and teamwork are important parts of the profession," says Freeman.

When the program first ran in 2002, it received good coverage from the local media. The coverage also generated calls from many other communities in western Canada that have large populations of aboriginal youth. "In many ways, the program has evolved into more than just a recruitment issue. In addition to providing youth with an opportunity, it also creates more exposure between the two cultures. Hopefully it will result in a better understanding and better integration of our various communities too," added Freeman. 

Profiling the Hinton Fire Department

Nestled in the heart of a recreational paradise, the Town of Hinton is home to nearly 10,000 residents. In addition to being surrounded by mountains, lakes, forests and streams, Hinton is a very progressive community that has earned bragging rights for many of its facilities and services, including the Hinton Fire Department's new residence.

The structure houses both the Hinton Fire Department and the town's ambulance service, Hinton EMS Ltd., and was developed as a condominium-style building with one common wall. Each organization owns its portion of the building and land. The building was designed with high operational efficiency in mind, both in terms of utilities and people movement. Equally

important is the fact that firefighters were asked for their input into the design, and the feedback received helped streamline some of the interior. With a view to potential needs in the future, the fire hall has a capacity for 20 full time staff as well as a dispatch room, if needed. As well, the hot water heating system has been designed to accept solar panels when budget dollars become available to purchase them. These will greatly

Brands is also proud that the new structure was built through local contractors. "We were able to use local people for about 90 per cent of the project, including the architect, contractor and much of the trades." With Brands and the ambulance operator working closely together, they were able to maintain cost and design control. "This enabled us to control everything that went into the building, including the dollars spent," added Brands.



The Hinton Fire Department's new home, which also houses the town's ambulance service

The Hinton Fire Department is comprised of two full time staff – the fire chief and his deputy fire chief, Colin Hanington – and a complement of 30 volunteers. The volunteers are paid per call, for training and for standby on

Equipment:

In addition to two command vehicles, the Hinton Fire Department also owns:

- 1982 1050 International Pumper (recently refurbished)
- 1991 Superior Lance Aerial 65 ft. telesquirt
- 1995 Medium Rescue FL60 and custom design box
- 2004 Superior 1250 Pump

Statistics:

Of 131 calls in 2003, there were 25 structure fires, 13 vehicle fires, 33 motor vehicle accidents, 10 bush fires, three dangerous goods fires and five rescues, with the remainder of calls classified under miscellaneous.

reduce utility costs when on stream. The apparatus floor is large enough for all of the department's current vehicles (see Sidebar) and the bays are also expandable.

The new structure also incorporates a hose drying and training tower, making Hinton the first community outside of the large cities to have these facilities. This enables the fire department to conduct multiple evolutions on the three-storey training tower. "The second floor of the training tower was designed with a typical apartment balcony and the third floor has a typical window, which enables our members to practice fire attack and elevated rescues," said Ken Brands, Fire Chief for the Town of Hinton. "The steel staircase and standpipe system inside allow us to practice advancing hose lines to upper floors and carrying patients. We can also smoke it up and work in the dark."

weekends. "I'm very proud to say that I have one of the best groups of volunteers based on their expertise, knowledge and skills. They come from all walks of life and their strength comes from both their dedication and their multiplicity," said Brands.

With a good training budget, the volunteers are encouraged to take courses at Vermilion in addition to the twice-monthly training that takes place in Hinton. "We focus on a different topic every training meeting, and most of the training is done by the deputy fire chief, our officers or me," added Brands. "We're striving to get everyone trained to the 1001 Standard and beyond."

The fire department's response area covers 5,500 square kilometres with a border that stretches 80 kilometres to the north (half way to Grande Cache), south to the McLeod River, west to the Jasper National Park boundaries and east to Anderson Road (halfway to Edson).

In 2003, the department responded to 131 calls (see Sidebar), a number that has steadily declined over the past 10 years. Brands attributes the decrease in the number of calls, in part, to their aggressive public education programs and fire prevention inspections conducted on a regular basis. With lots of older people returning to Hinton

to retire, the fire department also regularly makes safety presentations to seniors at the Sunset Manor and the extended care facility. As well, their fire prevention efforts include working with schools, where the *Risk Watch* program is being introduced to the classrooms in conjunction with Dave McKenna's efforts in Grande Cache.

With the decrease in calls and the increase in education and prevention, not only is the Hinton Fire Department in an ideal location, but they are also well positioned to accommodate the safety needs of their community now and into the future. 🔥

2002 – The stats

The 2002 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report

The reader-friendly version of the *2002 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report* is now posted on www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco under "Fire Statistics" as "Statistical Report – Short Version – 2002". Hard copies of the report were mailed during the first week of March to fire departments, the insurance industry and other fire service organizations in Alberta and Canada. This report represents the second year of a new format that contains fire data tables and charts interspersed with images specific to the year under review, received from fire and emergency service departments across Alberta, to enhance readability and add a touch of reality to the statistics.

The report summarizes 5,980 fire incidents in 2002 reported to the Fire Commissioner's Office. These fires resulted in 31 deaths, 307 injuries and \$273 million in property losses. The four main sections of the report – Fire Casualties, Fire Losses, Home Fire Losses, and the Glossary – were designed to provide readers a quick source of reference on fire causes and trends in Alberta. This information can guide the planning and implementation of public fire prevention and safety programs by fire departments. 🔥



ERRATA

Errors have been detected on page 4 data table titled "Location of Fire Deaths 2002," in the *2002 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report*, which was distributed in March 2004. These errors are a result of a complex transfer from the old municipality codes to the new codes. Consequently, nine municipalities were assigned with fire deaths that happened in other municipalities. This is the only error in the Fire Deaths data and this does not affect any other section in the report. The correct data table is given below.

Location of Fire Deaths 2002

Alberta Beach	1
Calgary	7
Edmonton	8
High Level	1
Innisfail	2
Kitscoty	1
Lethbridge	1
Medicine Hat	1
Rocky View No. 44, M.D. of	1
St. Albert	1
Stony Plain	3
Sturgeon County	1
Swan Hills	1
Gregoire Lake #176A	1
Stoney #144	1
Total	31

The following corrective measures have been taken:

- (1) The revised report is posted on the FCO website at: www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco
- (2) A personalized letter has been sent to fire chiefs of municipalities that were wrongly listed with fire deaths. These are: Athabasca; Beiseker; Bonnyville Beach; Carbon; Fairview; Grande Prairie; Hanna; Heisler; and Hill Spring.
- (3) A sticker with the correct data table was designed and distributed to recipients of the Stats Report so that the table in error can be covered over with the "Peel & Paste" sticker.

Please direct any inquiries regarding this revision to Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe at (780) 415-0546. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

In reading the report, the Fire Commissioner's Office would like to know if it meets your needs and in what ways you would like it improved. Please provide any comments on the report directly to Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe at (780) 415-0546. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton. Additional hard copies are available on request.

North Peace Tribal Council focus on fire safety

As the Fire Safety Officer for the North Peace Tribal Council (NPTC), Mark Andrews has a tremendous area to cover, both in terms of the work he does and the boundaries within his jurisdiction. He works with five First Nations communities:

- Dene Tha', which includes the communities of Chateh, Meander River and Bushie
- Beaver, which includes the two main communities of Boyer River and Child Lake
- Little Red River Cree, which includes John D'or Prairie, Fox Lake and Garden River
- Tall Cree, which includes North Tall Cree, South Tall Cree and Beaver Ranch
- Lubicon Lake (currently there is no land reserve as land claims registrations are presently underway. There are also no statistics on population data for this community.)

Together, these communities include more than 6,700 people spread over more than 68,799 hectares.

As the Fire Safety Officer for this expansive area, Andrews' priorities are to assist the communities in reducing the number of deaths and severity of injuries caused by fires and reducing the number of fires and the extent of property damage that results from fires.

To address these priorities, Andrews' responsibilities are also wide ranging, with a focus on conducting a number of fire safety activities. This includes fire safety training programs, training of local firefighters, investigating the cause of fires and maintaining statistical information surrounding fire losses. He also acts in an advisory role for the maintenance, purchase and development of all fire service-related equipment, systems and projects that arise.



Firefighters from five First Nations communities work with the North Peace Tribal Council to protect their residents

Having served with the NPTC for the past six years, and retired from a firefighter position with the Department of National Defence, Andrews is well qualified for his position with NPTC. He also volunteered as the deputy fire chief in Stony Plain for six years, and in addition to his current full-time position as Fire Safety Officer with NPTC, Andrews also serves as deputy fire chief for the Town of High Level and participates on the MD #23 Task Force on Regional Emergency Issues, where his major task is coordinating both formal and informal training.

Currently, only eight of the NPTC First Nation communities are served by fire departments; the others are not protected or are covered by fire service agreements, which is something that Andrews is working to change.

The fire loss statistics for this area are staggering. Since November 1996, potential losses were reported at \$11,799,383, with estimated loss at

\$3,524,098. To lessen the number of fires and the resulting losses, Andrews ensures that a number of proactive fire prevention activities occur, including presentations to schools about *Risk Watch*, *Learn Not to Burn*, McDonalds Fire Prevention program and the National Fire Protection Association materials. Andrews is proud of the fact that nine schools within NPTC participate in the annual poster contest held by the First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group/Human Resources Development Canada (TSAG/HRDC) each year.

To encourage fire prevention and safety education in the communities, pamphlets are distributed and fire department tours are held. Fire inspections are also conducted on an annual basis and upon special request for all schools, arenas, nursing stations, colleges, band offices, public works, stores, hot lunch rooms, etc.

Recent achievements include signing a fire service agreement between the Dene Tha' and the Town of High Level, which includes a fee for service with Chateh and Meander River and a specified amount for annual services with Bushie. An agreement is also being drafted for MD #23 Little Red River Cree Nation, Beaver First Nation and Tall Cree. As well, there are varying stages of disaster training development for many of the communities. For example, Little Red River Cree Nation has an established and very active disaster plan, with fall sessions planned; the Dene Tha' and Tall Cree First Nations are in the development stages of their disaster planning; and, as of summer 2004, there will be another fire hall established at the Child Lake Reserve I.R.# 164A.


Andrews says he is currently working on training venues as well as special training requests. In particular, some of the training being planned includes confined

space safe entry, ice rescue, vehicle extrication and WHMIS/TDG. "I've also had a number of requests from the communities for specific courses, such as portable fire extinguishers, evacuation drills, child care, CPR certification and the babysitter programs," said Andrews. "We're currently working to also provide those opportunities."

To ensure the best coverage possible, Andrews says they always try to have a volunteer base of eight to 10 volunteer firefighters scheduled per fire department. "With eight fire departments throughout the NPTC area, that creates a fluctuating total of about 64 volunteer firefighters," said Andrews. "The volunteer base will always be fluid, but with many of our firefighters being employed by Public Works departments, they are readily available during the day. An added bonus is that they also have access to the fire halls and equipment, as well as assembly buildings (e.g. schools, arenas and

administrative buildings) both during the day and after hours."

Each of the eight fire departments also has a part-time paid fire chief whose primary responsibilities include checking the fire hall, truck and equipment on a regular basis. The actions of the fire chiefs are monitored by the directors of Public Works within their respective bands. Andrews also does annual audits and training with the fire chiefs.

By working under the NPTC mission statement of "combining efforts to address issues, resolve problems and find economies by working together" and "providing resources and support to enable the provision of advisory services to member First Nations," Andrews and the volunteer firefighters of these five First Nations groups are enhancing both fire protection and fire safety education for their communities. 

Red Deer County firefighters train in aircraft fire protection and rescue procedures


Amertek Training 2003

Volunteer firefighters in the Red Deer County Fire District underwent extensive training last November in aircraft fire protection, rescue procedures and operation of the department's Amertek 2500 Rapid Intervention Vehicle. The course was prepared and taught by Fire Services Manager Don Bardonnex and Fire Chief Cliff Fuller based on accepted practices of the International Fire Service Training Association, Transport Canada

Training Directorate and the Amertek Operations Manual.

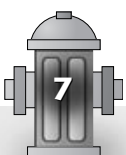
The six volunteer firefighters in the course received eight hours of classroom study on the following topics: apparatus

familiarization, vehicle specifications, the firefighting package of foam and dry chemical agents, driver training, flushing, purging and recharging the vehicle, crash firefighting, rescue criteria and tactics, pre-incident planning, types of aircraft incidents and fighting aircraft fires. Before receiving their department certification in these procedures, the candidates must also take and pass a course to obtain their Radiotelephone Operators Restricted Certificate.

Following their classroom study, the firefighters spent two days of practical work in operating the fire unit at the airport under simulated scenarios using an aircraft fuselage donated by Airspray 67 Ltd. However, live fire exercises could not be conducted due to a lack of facilities available to the department. 

Equipment specifications

The firefighters were trained on an Amertek 2500/225 twin agent Rapid Intervention truck. It features a Detroit two-stroke diesel, 480 hp, with a 6-speed automatic transmission. The truck's firefighting system includes a 550-gallon water tank, 77-gallon foam tank and 500 lbs. dry chemical powder expelled by a 275 cubic foot nitrogen tank. The single stage fire pump is PTO engine driven, delivering 500 gallons per minute at 220 psi. In addition to the remote controlled twin agent turret nozzle on the roof, a twin agent electric reel and hose line is stored in a side compartment for firefighter handline use.



Fire Electronic Reporting System

In the previous edition of *Alberta Fire News* (December 2003, Vol. 24 Number 3) we introduced you to the Fire Electronic Reporting System (FERS) and provided you with a brief history and update of the system. This report captures the more recent advancements in FERS.

FERS users (via *milenet* on-line)

- With the assistance of Fujitsu Consulting, the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is monitoring and improving the data entry and validation components of FERS for its users. Several action items have been identified and are being implemented to make FERS more user-friendly.

Electronic fire reporting using private software vendors

- The file interface specifications (specs) document, which specifies the data reporting standards for the private electronic reporting vendors, has been finalized. As requested by these reporting agencies, changes to the

specs document will only occur on an annual basis each December. Both parties have agreed that revisions may be necessary on an annual basis in order to accommodate the improvements and updates made to FERS. This year the specs will be evaluated and revised by both parties in December 2004.

- The City of Edmonton successfully completed its last test file in January 2004. They are now submitting live electronic files and their 2003 fire event information is being uploaded into the FERS database by FCO staff.
- The City of Calgary has sent in two electronic test files. These test files have both been uploaded successfully into the FERS test site. They are now ready to submit live electronic reports for 2004.
- The City of Lethbridge has successfully completed their first test file. Lethbridge in conjunction with several other municipalities uses the same software provider. Lethbridge acts as the test group for this assembly and is now encouraging the other municipal

users to send in their first test files. A second test batch is required before these users can start submitting live fire events for upload into FERS.

- The City of St. Albert has also sent in a few test files; however, these test files have been experiencing some difficulties and further investigation is required.

Fire Departments submitting hard copy fire reports

- The Fire Commissioner's Office now has PDF fillable report forms on their website for fire departments to download, complete and send in. Please save the forms on your computer and then use them to record and submit fire incidents. These PDF reports can be e-mailed, faxed or mailed to the FCO.

milenet

- A revised *milenet* agreement has been drafted and approved by the AUMA and Alberta Municipal Affairs to address and resolve concerns. The AUMA encourages municipal Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) to sign the revised *milenet* agreement and designate users for its applications. For a listing of the revised agreement please visit the AUMA website www.auma.ab.ca.
- Further *milenet* agreement resolutions with the City of Calgary are underway.
- The new *milenet* agreements have been mailed to all municipal CAOs. Please ensure that they sign this agreement and assign users for your fire department to enable/continue your access to FERS. 🔥

For questions, comments or feedback on FERS, please contact Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 644-4692. For technical assistance on fire reporting please contact Gloria Mercer at (780) 415-0548 or Val Carmody at (780) 427-1878. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

New requirement: fires must be reported to FCO within 30 days

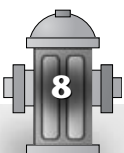
Section 9 of the Administrative Items Regulation AR 16/2004 under the *Safety Codes Act*, which came into force April 1, 2004, states that: "A safety codes officer for the fire discipline who investigates the causes and circumstances of a fire must

- within 30 days after the date of the fire started prepare and submit to the Fire Commissioner a report in a form satisfactory to the Fire Commissioner, and
- immediately notify the Fire Commissioner if the safety codes officer has information that the fire,
 - is or may be of incendiary origin, or
 - has resulted in loss of life,

and

- provide the Fire Commissioner any further information respecting the investigation that the Fire Commissioner requests."

The Fire Statistics Reporting Manual (2002 Edition) had on page 70 as a recommendation under REPORTING PROCEDURES that fire reports be submitted by Safety Codes Officers within 30 days after the date of the fire. From April 1, 2004 this will be a requirement as shown above. All fire reporting agencies are hereby informed to comply with this requirement.



News from Emergency Management Alberta

The official opening of the new Emergency Management Alberta (EMA) Operations Centre on December 18, 2003 also served as the launch of a more comprehensive perspective for Emergency Management Alberta. The 17,000 square foot operations centre fortifies Alberta's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from major emergencies and disasters. It is a secure, self-contained facility that houses separate operations centres for counter-terrorism, other natural and man-made emergencies and the sustainability of critical government services.

The new operations centre is a vital component of the Government of Alberta's Ministerial Task Force on Security, which was established in September 2001 in response to the events of September 11th. The centre also meets the Auditor General's 2002 recommendation for a stand-alone emergency operations centre. The new facility also allows for better coordination with partners from the private and public sectors and all orders of government to deal with all types of emergencies. The facility has its own back up power source, four separate communications methods and contains technologically advanced planning equipment and software. The first of its kind in Canada, the new operations centre has been acclaimed as an excellent model for the rest of the country and beyond, both in terms of the building and its capabilities, aimed to



Emergency Notification System

The Government of Alberta's new Emergency Notification System is a state-of-the-art system designed to help protect Albertans by notifying all orders of government, first responders and the private sector if there is a change in the level of threat to the province's security. With the system, EMA is able to quickly select personnel by geographical area and send both voice and hard copy information about an emergency. "It is important to note that it is not a 'public' warning system," said Dave Redman, Acting Executive Director of Emergency Management Alberta. "It is designed for key personnel involved in emergency management."

The key to the system is the TELUS Geomatics system, which includes over 340 layers of critical information. These layers of information are then enhanced with an encrypted layer that links all of our first responders – every fire hall, police station and EMS dispatch

centre in Alberta as well as all our municipal government and critical infrastructure – to a telephone interactive voice response call-out system that can make more than 500 calls in five minutes. The system is managed by Emergency Management Alberta, Crisis Management Programs. While its primary use is for counter-terrorism mitigation and preparedness activities, it is also configured for warning response agencies of other types of emergencies, such as tornadoes, floods or interruption of government business, etc.

"This system has become the Canadian benchmark for Geospatial systems in support of emergency operations," added Redman.

"Even more impressive is the fact that all of this technology is Alberta based and has been developed through a public-private sector partnership between EMA and our service providers."

protect citizens, their property and the environment.

"The state-of-the-art planning response capability in our system is not found in most Emergency Management organizations in Canada or the United States," said Dave Redman, Acting

Executive Director of Emergency Management Alberta.

"The Government of Canada is now modeling their new centre after this

facility, not just the floor layout but also all the technology solutions that it houses, like our Emergency Notification System."

Emergency Management Alberta has also worked with several provinces and several U.S. states to offer its concepts and systems in their development of capabilities. When U.S. Ambassador Paul Cellucci visited the centre in December 2003, he expressed his admiration for the level of capability achieved in Alberta.

In addition to the centre, EMA also led the design and implementation of a new Emergency Notification System (see Sidebar), which is based on Alberta technology. 🔥



Risk Watch activities continue

Risk Watch implementation network

The *Risk Watch* teleconference held on January 22, 2004, featured Dr. Robert Conn, Director of the SMARTRISK Foundation who spoke on "Marketing Injury Prevention." Dr. Conn focused on nine reasons that impede the marketing of injury prevention (see Sidebar). Any further information on marketing injury prevention from the SMARTRISK Foundation will be distributed to the network when it is available.

Please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner at (780) 415-0546 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton) or mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca for *Risk Watch*-related initiatives and information.

Revision of Risk Watch and translation into french

This project undertaken by the SMARTRISK Foundation is well underway according to a recent presentation by Dr. Conn, Director of the Foundation.

Progress so far includes:

- Established working groups
 - Francophone working group
 - Injury prevention program experts
 - Teacher's working group
 - *Risk Watch* Coalition representatives
 - Provincial/territorial representatives (Alberta representatives include Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe who serves on the National Reference Group, Assistant Fire Marshal Tim Vandenbrink who serves on the Coalition Ad-Hoc Committee and Jan deLeeuw who serves on the Teachers' Ad-Hoc Committee.)
- Established *Risk Watch* Revision Advisory Committee (RWRAC), consisting of educators, educational administrators, curriculum experts, fire prevention specialists, public health nurses, police representatives, injury prevention experts, evaluation experts and francophone links.

What's changing?

- Critical thinking model: Look First, Think Twice, Choose Smart
- Wherever possible, behaviours instead of rules are being taught
- Positive language: Do instead of Don't
- Regional differences are being built in – i.e. forest fires
- More challenging activities for all grades but especially grades 7 and 8 modules
- Activities are being updated – i.e. inclusion of ATVs and snowmobiles and use of protective gear for activities beyond bicycling
- Canadian standards and terminology – i.e. four hazard symbols
- Increased cross-lesson integration and consistency of messages
- Lesson plans are more detailed, giving emphasis on expectations, reflection, resources, procedures, reflect again, demonstrate learning, assessment, related activities, links to home and community, extensions and regional issues.

Current status

- Grades 7-8 modules and PreK-K are completed and have been sent to the NFPA for review
- Revision work on Grades 5-6 and Grades 3-4 have been circulated to the Teachers' Working Group and the RWRAC for feedback
- Revision work on Grade 1-2 underway

Feedback on the revised *Risk Watch* modules have been very positive, as indicated below:


- "The new included assessment tools give us a broader ability to 'see what they know' – this will help us 'gather support for the program as we can prove to parents and school boards that the program is working' "
- "The links to home and community are excellent as is the list of resources per module included at the end of the package"
- "Now I will have no problem selling this to other educators"



Risk Watch Champion management team update

With the start of the 2003-04 school year in September, the CMT began implementing the in-service training sessions and pilots in five communities. Tim Vandenbrink, mentor and Assistant Fire Marshal of Fire Prevention at the Edmonton Emergency Response Department, is supporting the team members.

The five communities participating in the pilot are listed below (and the respective CMT contact is indicated in parentheses). Members of the local fire departments are also involved for each of the communities.

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

Correction: In the August 2003 issue of Alberta Fire News, The City of Red Deer was mentioned as one of the five cities selected for the pilot project for Risk Watch. This was in error, and the Editorial Board apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused. However, the CMT will support Red Deer in its efforts to promote Risk Watch in their school system.

Nine ways to move forward on injury prevention

They kill and disable thousands of Canadians every year, yet few people give much thought to unintentional injuries. Dr. Robert Conn outlines nine challenges we must meet to change that situation.

1. Prevention versus treatment

It's much harder to get support for issues dealing with prevention than for those dealing with treatment. Why? It's far easier to get the public and policy makers behind an issue when you can point to people who have been hurt or who are dying of a disease. The people that prevention programs are helping tend to be invisible and healthy. The challenge is to convince people to invest in prevention, not just treatment.

2. Accident

Society tends to call unintentional injuries "accidents," suggesting that these are unavoidable acts of fate or chance. People who believe injuries are acts of fate tend to go into denial, believing "it won't happen to me." We need to help people realize that injuries are predictable and preventable.

3. Limited research

People working in injury prevention don't have enough evidence on which to base their programming. More research will also help us tell our stories. The media is filled with new research items on cancer, heart disease and the like. That new knowledge becomes the story that fuels the public's interest in the issue area. New studies on cell phones and driving are a good example of the kinds of stories the media pick up and the public are interested in.

4. Access to data

Data on who is getting hurt and how does exist, but it can be difficult to access. Health information is protected for good reasons but those safeguards that keep information private also make it difficult for those of us interested in the issue to access the information.

5. Training

People working in injury prevention have come to it through a variety of routes, often as a result of a very personal interest. There are no university programs to train people in injury prevention and very limited continuing education programs. The new Canadian Injury Prevention Curriculum is a first step towards addressing this gap.

6. Organization of information

You can walk into any library in Canada and if you're looking for information on heart disease or cancer, it will be organized in exactly the same way. And yet, you'd probably be hard pressed to find any two individuals who work in injury prevention who have organized their information in the same way. That's because there is no organized system for classifying, cataloguing and organizing information on injury prevention. We're beginning to address that problem at SMARTRISK by developing a thesaurus for injury prevention as well as an extensive, fully staffed library devoted to injury prevention. The library will be the only one of its kind in Canada.

7. Lack of identity

Those of us who work in injury prevention often find it very difficult to explain to people what we do. If you ask people what injury prevention is, you are likely to be met with a blank stare. But if you break it into its component bits and ask, "What's fire prevention? What's drowning prevention? How do you prevent car crashes?", people begin to get an understanding of what you're talking about. However, if people think about injury prevention only in individual components, we lose the opportunity to mobilize their support for the issue writ large. We need to get people to understand the overall issue of injuries, rather than just individual bits.

8. Lack of profile

As a result of people not being able to understand the issue, injury prevention has a lack of profile. It's the third highest economic burden in our health care system, killing more youth than every other cause combined. Seventy per cent of teenage deaths are due to injury, yet it has a very low public profile.

9. Limited resources

Very limited resources have been directed towards injury prevention to date. But if we can meet these other challenges, we expect that the needed resources will materialize.

At SMARTRISK, we believe we can make great strides towards preventing injuries and deaths through working to meet these nine challenges.



Dr. Robert Conn


Creating a Risk Watch data base

Requesting your assistance

The Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) and the Risk Watch Champion Management Team are in the process of compiling a directory of the schools and local *Risk Watch* networks that are using or supporting *Risk Watch* in Alberta. This database will improve communication between the management team, the FCO and the local *Risk Watch* users and networks. With this data, the *Risk Watch* Champion Team will be able to update

users and networks with valuable tips, and ensure feedback for continuous improvement.

If your community, school or fire department has promoted the use of *Risk Watch*, please contact Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 644-4692 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton), or e-mail te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca so that a directory

of *Risk Watch* users and networks can be prepared. Please provide details on the number of schools or users in your region teaching *Risk Watch*, as well as the grades and number of classrooms that are using it. In addition, if there is a local *Risk Watch* network (usually consists of fire department, RCMP, regional health unit, other injury prevention professionals, etc.), please also provide this information. Thank you for your assistance! 

Teaching teachers about safety programs for students

Alberta teachers had the chance to learn more about the safety and injury prevention programs available for their students during teachers' conventions held around the province in February and March.

The Fire Commissioner's Office, in cooperation with fire departments, sponsored trade show booths at six Alberta Teachers' Conventions (see list below) between February 5 and March 5 of this year:

- North Central Teachers' Convention
- Central Alberta Teachers' Convention
- Calgary City Teachers Convention
- South Western Teachers' Convention
- Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention
- Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention

These six conventions provided the best opportunity for the fire service to meet face-to-face with teachers. The major promotion theme this year was *Risk Watch*, along with a display of the newly acquired Hazard Houses. The interactive demonstrations with the Hazard Houses, enthusiasm of the booth presenters and the opportunity to win door prizes resulted in many teachers visiting the booths.

The following Fire Safety Officers and Fire Department representatives participated as booth presenters: Ed Pomerleau, Dave Martin (St. Albert F.D.); Tom O'Gorman; Wes Van Bavel (Red Deer. F.D.); Ken McMullen; Calgary F.D. staff; Kevan Jess; Jack Chapman (Lethbridge F.D.); and Mark Whelpton (Grande Prairie F.D.).

The *Risk Watch* Champion Management Team representatives – Dave McKenna (Team Leader) and Tim Vandenbrink (Mentor) – gave a joint presentation at the North Central Teachers' Convention in Edmonton. This workshop was well attended and received excellent evaluations from the participants. Dave and Tim presented "injuries" as a serious problem in the province and reinforced their points with a video from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. The *Risk Watch* program and the resources and support networks available were discussed as a solution to the injury problem. 🔥

Serving the servants

Retreat society helps emergency service workers

Alberta's emergency service workers dedicate their lives to helping members of their communities live safe and healthy lives. But who helps them when they are faced with a family issue or personal crisis and need a safe place to go?

The Diakonos Retreat Society created such a place: Diakonos House. This residential house provides a safe haven for emergency service workers and their families to stay during a separation or divorce, recovery from an addiction, or when a medical situation requires an overnight stay in the city. The first house opened in Calgary in 1997, and a similar facility opened in Edmonton in August 2003.

In addition to the confidential services of the Diakonos Houses, the society offers activities that encourage family togetherness and help ease the stress that emergency service work can put on families. This includes courses in everything from conflict management and improving communication, to parenting skills and stress management. Additional activities include horseback riding trips and conferences as well as trips to countries



Diakonos retreat participants take a break during a home-building project

like Mexico where parents and teens help build homes for Mexican families living in poverty.




A trail ride at Dutch Creek in Kananaskis Country

Kevin McInnes, a Calgary police officer and co-founder of the society, is pleased with their continued progress. "Last year we had more than 400 family members attend our events, and we're looking forward to another year of growth, including the development of a new

officer, firefighter and spouse training conference to assist people in making the transition to emergency service work," he said.

Funding for Diakonos House and its services is provided by private and corporate donors. Plans are also underway for a Retreat Centre in Alberta that would benefit emergency

service workers throughout Western Canada. 

For more information, contact the Diakonos Retreat Society at (403) 201-9945 or visit www.diakonosretreat.com

Activities scheduled for 2004

The Diakonos Retreat Society organizes a diverse range of activities throughout the year, from a marriage retreat and family conference to various adventures. Some of the activities scheduled for 2004 include:

May 21-24

Family Conference entitled "Emotional Survival for First Responders and their families"

Jul 5-7

Blue Bronna Horseback Riding Adventure #1

Aug 23-25

Blue Bronna Horseback Riding Adventure #2

Oct 29-31

Off Duty Partners Retreat

Nov 12-13

Marriage Encouragement Banquets

For more information about these activities and others, please contact Kevin or Debbie McInnes at (403) 201-9945 or email at diakonosretreat@shaw.ca

Keeping you informed...

Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Update

Mark your calendar for the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) 2004 annual conference and trade show, which takes place June 13-17, 2004 in Red Deer. The conference takes place at the Red Deer Capri Centre and is hosted by the Red Deer Emergency Services and the Red Deer County Fire Services. In addition to three days of interesting educational sessions, the conference also includes the annual golf tournament, trade show, barbeque and banquet. 

For more information or to register, contact Jim Prendergast, Deputy Chief, Red Deer Emergency Services, at (403) 346-5511, or e-mail him at jimp@city.reddeer.ab.ca

Saying goodbye

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Kathy Makey, beloved wife of former Alberta Fire Commissioner Tom Makey.

Many in the fire service met Kathy and those who attended the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association annual conferences benefited from her tremendous energy, enthusiasm and organizational skills. On the executive of the Companions' Program for seven years, Kathy worked tirelessly to ensure that spouses of fire chiefs also had an interesting agenda of activities at the conferences. Kathy was also instrumental in many of the fundraising activities for the burn units. "She will be missed," said Alice Marchand, former Companion Program committee member. "She was always a big supporter of the program and helped out wherever she could."


In addition to being a mother of four, Kathy also played an important role in Tom's career. As long time friend Harvey Marchand, former fire chief for Fort McMurray, then regional fire chief for the municipality says, "Much of Tom's work required long hours and constant travel, and Kathy played a very strong support role for him. She stood behind him during all his stages in the fire service, and accompanied him on many occasions. She had a great sense of humour, and I never recall her being in a bad mood. She was truly a wonderful lady."



Responding to an emergency

Imagine: it's 9:00 p.m. and your emergency pager goes off, indicating an emergency within your jurisdiction. The fire hall is five kilometres away and the fire is another five kilometres beyond the hall. We all know that fire grows rapidly in the first few minutes and there can be total devastation within minutes.

You jump in your vehicle, race out of your driveway and start towards the hall. It's going to take you at least 10 minutes to get there driving at the speed limit, but this is an emergency. Halfway to the hall, you realize that the pumper truck probably left without you. You have your bunker gear in the back and the crossroad to the incident scene is the next corner, where you can shave a couple of precious minutes off the response time. Do you stop for the stop sign, or is getting to the fire the most important thing?

Regardless of your occupation or your reasons, following the rules of the road is everyone's responsibility – even if you are responding to a fire! Firefighting is dangerous enough without making it worse by reckless or careless driving. 

Rules of the road are for everyone

Use of Sirens & Flashing Green Lights

Highway Traffic Act – RSA1980

- 59** No vehicle other than an emergency vehicle shall, while on a highway, be equipped with a siren.
- 59.1** (1) In this section,
(b) "volunteer firefighter" means a person who voluntarily acts as a firefighter in the fire protection services of a municipality for a nominal consideration or honorarium.
- (2) Where a municipal bylaw permits it, a full time or volunteer firefighter may carry on or in a vehicle, other than an emergency vehicle, a lamp that produces intermittent flashes of green light and may operate the lamp if the vehicle is proceeding to a fire or other emergency.
- (3) No person other than a full time or volunteer firefighter shall operate a lamp that produces intermittent flashes of green light.
- (4) Nothing in this section shall be construed so as to permit a full time or
- 68** volunteer fighter to operate a vehicle in contravention of this Act, the regulation or a municipal bylaw.
- A siren and lights on an emergency vehicle shall be operated only when the vehicle is being used to respond to an emergency, an emergency call or an alarm.
- 68.1** (1) An operator of an emergency vehicle may, while the vehicle's siren and lights are operating
(a) operate the vehicle in excess of the posted speed limit,
(b) proceed past a red traffic light, stop signal or stop sign without stopping, and
(c) contravene any other rule of the road that is prescribed by the Act, the regulations or a municipal bylaw, where considering the circumstances, it is reasonable and safe to do so.
- (2) An emergency vehicle, while its siren and lights are operating, has the right of way over all.

Information update from fire etc.

Keeping you up to date...

Emergency services technology students receive awards

Four students in the Emergency Services Technology program were recognized for their efforts at the Lakeland College awards ceremonies on March 17:

- Russell Smith of Edson received the D.E. (Ted) Gustavson Legacy Scholarship of \$500
- Kevin Olson of Calgary received a Lakeland College Academic Award of \$250

- Scott Berg of Medicine Hat received the Royal Canadian Legion, Field Marshal Alexander Branch #11 Award of \$200 and a Golden Axe
- Geoff Middleton of Port Coquitlam, B.C. received the Emergency Services Technology Award of \$200

New program trains high school students

In February, Buffalo Trail Public Schools and **fire etc.** entered into an innovative agreement to incorporate firefighter training into the regional high school



fire etc.

program. This locally developed pilot course is the first of its kind in Alberta, and 15 students from various Buffalo Trail schools are enrolled. The 80-hour program consists of home study and three on-site practical sessions at **fire etc.**

Students will be eligible to earn three high school credits. They will also be granted credit toward NFPA 1001 and will be eligible for two international certifications for NFPA 472, Awareness Level.

Tours

Free tours are once again available at **fire etc.** during the training season. They are offered by advance appointment on Wednesdays at 1:30 pm, and on Thursdays at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm. Call 1-888-863-2387.

New coordinator for emergency preparedness

Joanne Sheardown recently joined **fire etc.** as the new Coordinator of Emergency Planning and Preparedness. She has more than 10 years of experience in coordinating disaster planning and training with regional health authorities and with municipal, provincial and federal emergency planning agencies in Alberta and British Columbia. Her



Students from the Buffalo Trail school district can now earn high school credits by taking part in firefighter training

experience also includes responding to municipal and multi-jurisdictional emergencies and disasters, including working at the Emergency Operations

Centre for last summer's wildfires in the Kelowna-Kamloops area. Joanne is working out of the southern Alberta region, and can be reached at (403) 519-5157. 🔥

Courses/training opportunities

Dangerous Goods Responder-Technician training goes ahead

Due to the large number of queries for the Dangerous Goods Responder – Technician training, **fire etc.** has scheduled an offering of this 72-hour course from July 19-30 at Vermilion. To register, call 1-888-863-2387 and quote course ID #1-DGTC.

NFPA 1003 – Airport Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications

Accredited by ProBoard and IFSAC

Module 1: May 31-June 4, 2004; August 16-20, 2004 (ID #1-ARFF)

- 40 hours of theory and practical
- Airport and aircraft familiarization, communications, pre-emergency planning, practices for hazardous conditions and emergencies, and incident simulations

- Students must possess a valid driver's license with airbrake endorsement

Module 2: June 7-11, 2004; August 23-27, 2004 (ID #2-ARFF)

- 40 hours of theory and practical
- Fire behaviour specific to airports and aircraft, characteristics of aviation fuels, extinguishing agents, use of foam equipment and application methods, strategy and tactics, rescue, and post-incident operations
- ARFF vehicle maintenance, driver training, fire package practical exercises such as flow rates and reach of streams, water and extinguishment agent supply, recharging fire packages, and fire runs
- Extinguishment of fuel fires in sizes varying from 9.3 m² (100 ft²) to 456 m² (5000 ft²) and three-dimensional aircraft fuel fires
- Students must possess a valid driver's license with airbrake endorsement

- Prerequisites: ID #1-ARFF (Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Module 1), ID #1001-33.1 (SCBA), and ID #1001-33.9 (Interior Structure Fire)

Several offerings of **Instructor Methodology III** (ID #3-FSI) are scheduled for spring and summer: May 24-27, May 31-June 3, June 21-24, and July 19-22. Refer to the **fire etc.** training calendar or the website to see which NFPA 1001 modules will be taught each week.

Basic Fire Apparatus Maintenance (ID #1-BFM)

September 20-24

Advanced Fire Apparatus Maintenance (ID #1-AFAM)

September 27-October 8

Juvenile firesetter intervention programs in Alberta

The term juvenile firesetting includes all fires started unintentionally or intentionally by children and adolescents under 18 years of age. This term includes fire play, juveniles who start fires out of curiosity and are too young to understand their actions, and firesetting juveniles who set fires deliberately and know what they are doing.

Juvenile firesetting is a significant issue in Alberta. In the five-year period between 1998 and 2002, a total of 743 destructive fires were started by juveniles in our province. These fires caused over \$15 million in property damage and resulted in five deaths and 115 injuries. When

interpreting these figures, one must keep in mind that this data only encompasses those fires that were reported; therefore, the actual losses are probably greater.

For many years, the most common intervention resource available for the fire service was the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Handbook by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). More recently, a Canadian juvenile firesetting intervention program, TAPP-C, has become available.

Today, fire departments have access to both the FEMA and TAPP-C programs. These programs offer a somewhat



"A child's fascination with fire begins at an early age" (photo and text taken from the TAPP-C poster)

different approach to the intervention of juvenile firesetting; however, both have been effective in various communities across Alberta. Fire departments may wish to choose either of these programs to implement a successful juvenile firesetter intervention program in their community. The thinking between these two programs are summarized in the table below:

<i>Juvenile firesetter intervention programs in Alberta</i>	
FEMA	TAPP-C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire behaviour naturally emerges in most children around the age of three. This is a normal interest and is expected behaviour. • Most of these children are at little risk for becoming involved in future fire incidents if they receive the proper supervision and educational intervention. • Only a small per cent of juvenile firesetting includes factors such as a lack of fire knowledge, curiosity, access issues, behaviour problems, family dynamics, learning disorders and more serious mental issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who have been referred for firesetting have often been involved with fire numerous times before they are referred for services. This indicates a problem. • There is plenty of evidence that firesetting by children is an indication that there are other complex problems in the child's life. This often involves an array of factors such as a lack of fire knowledge, curiosity, access issues, behaviour problems, family dynamics, learning disorders and more serious mental issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If guided by parents, caretakers, schools and the fire service, most children learn how to master and control fire in their environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because juvenile firesetting involves the above multi-faceted problems, it needs to be guided by mental health services along with parents, schools and the fire service in order to be treated comprehensively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fire service is the leading community agency responsible for early intervention. The fire department's role in early intervention is to assess each child's firesetting risk by categorizing it into little, definite and extreme risk groups. The risk level assigned determines the appropriate type of intervention: fire education, mental health, child welfare, or law enforcement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the fire service is to provide home fire safety checks and fire education to all juvenile firesetters referred into the program. • The fire service does not conduct an assessment to determine intervention strategies. They are to provide home safety checks and education only. • Predicting firesetting risk is a complicated task and requires a trained mental health professional.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only juvenile firesetters involved in repeated or recurring firesetting behaviour and who display serious psychological problems are referred to mental health services for treatment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All juvenile firesetters are referred to mental health services and the fire service using a pre-determined central intake agency. • Mental health services will provide the risk assessment and determine the intervention strategy, if required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most effective approach to combat juvenile firesetting is to set up a program designed to link and organize a network of necessary community services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These linkages include the collaboration and coordination of fire services, mental health services, child welfare, police, juvenile justice, parents, schools and medical centres to develop an early identification and intervention process. 	

As part of their advisory and support role, the Fire Commissioner's Office has offered a number of publications and services for juvenile firesetter intervention. These include the following:

In 1998, the Fire Commissioner's Office produced the second edition of *The Alberta Juvenile Firesetter Handbook & Resource Directory*. The handbook portion was modelled on the FEMA program and includes an explanation of juvenile firesetter profiles, prevention and intervention strategies and related statistics; the directory portion contains linkages between local fire and mental health services to encourage collaboration for program implementation. The Fire Commissioner's Office will update and revise this publication to include a description of both the TAPP-C and FEMA programs and will provide an up-to-date resource directory linking local fire departments to their corresponding


Materials available

Fire service and counselling professionals can obtain either the FEMA or TAPP-C programs, as well as other juvenile firesetter intervention resources such as *Fire... It's No Game for Children to Play*, *Guidelines for Caregivers of Juvenile Firesetters* and *The Alberta Juvenile Firesetter Handbook & Resource Directory* from the Fire Commissioner's Office. For those individuals who have already received the TAPP-C package but were awaiting program manuals please note that the TAPP-C manual for counselling professionals is now available. Please contact Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office for more information.



mental health services. Additionally, the Fire Commissioner's Office has produced a fire safety pamphlet for parents and caregivers to assist them in protecting, teaching, and training children on fire safe behaviours. This pamphlet is titled *Fire... It's No Game for Children to Play*.

The Fire Commissioner's Office also hosted a joint meeting between representatives from the fire service and counselling services on January 23,

2004 to discuss the future direction of juvenile firesetter intervention in Alberta. Progress from these meetings will be reported in future issues of *Alberta Fire News*. 

For more information on juvenile firesetter intervention contact Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office at te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca or (780) 644-4692. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

Fire Commissioner's Office regional update

Changing the way of doing business...

The Alberta Emergency Resources Inventory System (AERIS) is well underway. The web application has been completed and has been moved to its *milenet* home, and amendments to the *milenet* agreement are underway to allow municipal and fire department access directly to the database and information.


Data collection is also proceeding very well. As of March 16, 2004, 76 per cent of fire departments have submitted their initial data, which is being uploaded by the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). Fire Safety Officers (FSO) will be working with fire departments to ensure that the data is accurate and to assist with any updates required. Updates may be sent to the Regional Offices, to the FCO, or uploaded directly by fire departments into AERIS when the *milenet* amendments are complete.

All municipalities that have signed the *milenet* agreements may have access to both FERS (Fire Electronic Reporting

System) and AERIS. Accreditation under the Safety Codes Act does NOT determine a fire department's access to either system. As long as a municipality has signed the *milenet* agreement and grants authorization to personnel to access the applications, any fire department can gain access to the systems. Non-accredited fire departments may access FERS for fire reporting purposes by completing the fire report forms and notifying their FSO to finalize it. Note: this does require a certain level of co-operation with the FSO.

In response to feedback, future upgrades to the AERIS system are being considered at this time. These will include a new page covering organization, human resource and response data. The FCO receives numerous calls every week from fire departments and municipalities looking for survey data about wages,

staffing models, types and numbers of responses that fire departments are going to, and many others. The new page will attempt to collect this data and allow you to generate those reports in seconds, as opposed to weeks of surveys and phone calls. We will also be expanding and improving the equipment data and hope to include the ambulance portion of many emergency services.

We encourage all fire services to submit their thoughts, concerns and suggestions regarding these programs and any others that the FCO is involved with. Only with your guidance and input will these systems meet your needs. 

For further information on AERIS, please contact Ernie Polsom, Assistant Fire Commissioner, at (780) 415-0549. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

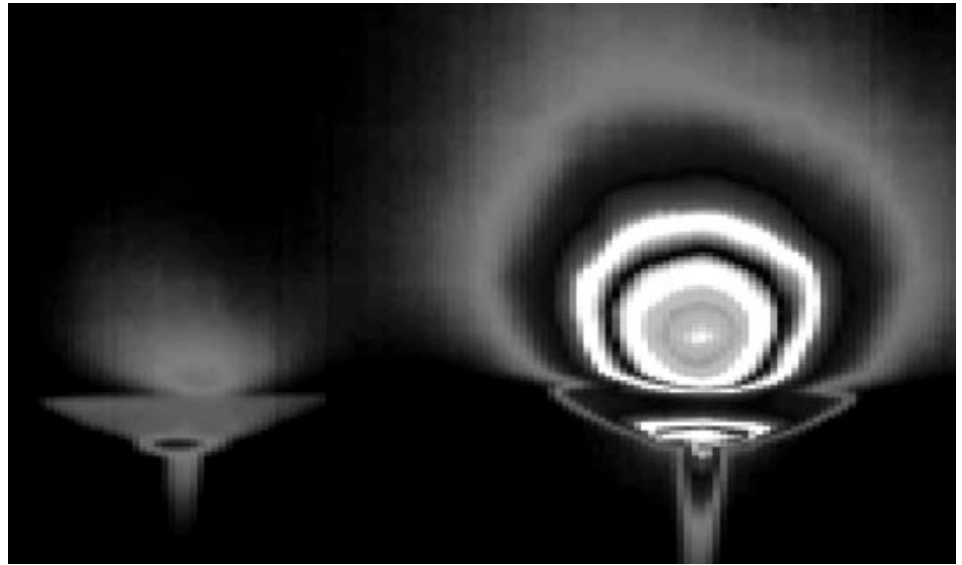


Halogen lamp fires reveal patterns of misuse

Halogen torchiere floor lamps are free-standing lamps with a shallow, bowl-shaped light fixture mounted on top of a tall, thin pole. They are illuminated by a tubular halogen bulb. Assessments conducted by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in the U.S. have shown that tubular halogen bulbs of 250, 300 and 500 watts installed in torchiere lamps could start a fire if they come in contact with flammable materials. In 1997, Underwriter's Laboratories (UL) adopted a revised performance standard for halogen torchiere floor lamps based on CPSC findings. Currently, UL requires manufacturers to produce only 300 watt (or less) halogen torchiere lamps with glass bulb guards. However, many residences and workplaces still use the older versions of halogen lamps with higher wattages.

Heat given off from a 500 watt tubular halogen bulb can reach a temperature of 650° Celsius (1,200° Fahrenheit) and a 300 watt bulb can reach a temperature of 520° C (970° F). This is far greater than the ignition temperature of most combustibles. For example, wood can ignite at less than 200° C (390° F). When compared to a 150 watt incandescent light bulb that can reach a temperature of 170° C (340° F), both the 500 and 300 watt tubular halogen bulbs present a far greater fire risk.

The Fire Statistics Information System at the Fire Commissioner's Office has captured about 30 halogen lamp-related fires between January 1996 and March 2004. Listed to the right are common ignition scenarios and misuse patterns that the public must be warned about to prevent these fires (the public should also be advised that energy efficient and safer compact fluorescent lamp torchieres are available as alternatives).



An infrared thermograph of a compact fluorescent lamp (left) and a halogen fixture (right) illustrates difference in heat energy output

Misuse patterns with halogen lamps

- Leaving lamps turned on when not in use
- Using lamps to illuminate hazardous work areas (auto repairs, spray painting)
- Using lamps as heat sources (e.g., to keep farm animals warm, drying clothes, etc.)
- Placing lamps near drapes/curtains, bunk beds or other combustibles
- Placing lamps in children's rooms
- Pets (cats, dogs) knocking down tall, unstable lamps
- Lack of understanding of the fire hazards of halogen lamps:
 - Many don't realize that halogen lamps operate at much hotter temperatures than the incandescent bulbs
 - Torchieres can be unstable due to their top-heavy design and more prone to falling over than other floor lamps, increasing fire risk
 - Seniors seem more attracted to halogen torchieres because of the high light output required due to their declining eyesight, but this in turn can increase fire risk

Common ignition scenarios in halogen lamp fire incidents

Energized halogen lamp plus:

- clothing, fabric (covered with / nearby)
- Plastic toy in the bowl-shaped fixture
- Nearby drapes/curtains
- Paint/paint thinner
- Newspapers
- Sawdust insulation
- Gasoline
- Nearby building structural (wood) components

The 2002 edition of the *Fire Commissioner's Fire Statistics Reporting Manual* has assigned a unique source of ignition code (651) to capture halogen lamp-related fire incidents, with the goal of enabling more accurate analysis of these fires in the future. 🔥

For further information on the safe use of halogen lamps, please contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at 780-427-8392. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

Fire Prevention Week

Every year the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) and the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association (AWNA) hold a competition for Alberta weekly newspapers that provide fire safety coverage for Fire Prevention Week. This contest is held in recognition of the valuable support that the weekly newspapers provide in educating Albertans about fire safety during Fire Prevention Week.

In order to be eligible for the contest, weekly newspapers must have ensured that their Fire Prevention Week coverage included an array of:

- fire safety messages
- locally written fire articles
- editorials and photographs
- local community and fire department initiatives
- messages and themes from the FCO's Fire Prevention Week campaign kit
- innovative, interesting and accurate coverage
- an overall attractive design and appearance

For the 2003 contest, a panel of three judges were selected to evaluate the submissions. These judges included Kari-Ann Kuperis, Communications branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs; Lynda Herscovitch, Head of Advertising for the Public Affairs Bureau; and Lisa Matheson, Public Education Coordinator, Strathcona County Emergency Services.



Mahendra Wijayasinghe presenting the overall grand prize to The Macleod Gazette



Te-Jay Smart speaking at the AWNA convention

This year the Fire Commissioner's Office received 49 submissions for the contest.

Entries were divided into three circulation categories for evaluation. In each of these categories, the first place winner received a plaque as a promotional excellence award from the FCO, while two secondary winners were rewarded with an honourable mention certificate. The overall grand prize winner, The Macleod Gazette, received a weekend stay for two courtesy of the Mayfield Inn, Edmonton.


2004 media coverage winners for FPW:

1st Prize:

- The Macleod Gazette
- The Leduc Representative
- The Brooks and County Chronicle

Honorable Mentions:

- The Jasper Booster
- The Consort Enterprise
- The Barrhead Leader
- Sedgewick Community Press
- Devon Dispatch News
- The Meridian Booster

Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe and Fire Safety Officer (programs) Te-Jay Smart of the FCO presented the awards to the winning newspapers at the Annual Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association Symposium on January 24, 2004 in Edmonton. 

Firefighters and fundraising make an awesome duo

Definition of a firefighter: fighting fires, educating people about fire safety/fire prevention and participating in a diverse range of charity events. A simplistic definition perhaps, but certainly regular aspects of almost every firefighter's yearly activities. In fact, firefighters are continually called upon to get involved with many different organizations, from local community events to national fundraising campaigns. One group in particular – Muscular Dystrophy Canada – has been involved with firefighters since its inception in 1954 (see Sidebar for more information). Another key group that is close to the hearts of firefighters is the Burn Society. Whether they're volunteer or full time career firefighters, across Alberta thousands of firefighters engage in many fundraising activities each year.

Garry Mauch, Fire Chief for the City of Medicine Hat, says his 60 full time career firefighters donate time for the Muscular Dystrophy Labour Day boot drive and the local Burn Society, but also get involved in other activities in the community. "Throughout the year and at various public events firefighters utilize the opportunities to raise funds for the Burn Society. At Christmas for example, the downtown merchants host a community fest and the firefighters are there with an engine. The truck provides an attraction to draw people in. Hotdogs, hamburgers, coffee, etc. are cooked and sold with the proceeds going to the local chapter of the Burn Society," said Mauch.

"The firefighters have also been involved in a number of other activities over the years, including the development of a history book of the Medicine Hat Fire Service which sold very well. They have also dedicated their time to producing

Teaming up for Muscular Dystrophy

Firefighters have been the backbone of Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC) since its inception in 1954, and are involved on the organization committee for their 50-year celebration later this year. Firefighters are the largest single group of fundraisers for MDC. Each year they raise in excess of \$2 million dollars nationwide.

In addition to being fundraisers, MDC quickly acknowledges that firefighters are their best ambassadors. Through education, support and media relations they generate awareness about muscular dystrophy with the public like no one else. Their fundraising efforts range from pancake breakfasts, community dances, magic shoes, St. Patrick's Give a Buck for Luck, and pub crawls, to dart, golf and volleyball tournaments. They're also involved with dog-sled races, car washes, ladder-a-thons and the annual Boot Drive.

calendars with the proceeds of the sales going again to the Burn Society. Other events such as challenge hockey games and baseball games have brought money in for the Burn Society," said Mauch. The firefighters have high visibility in the community. Not only are they dedicated in their role in protecting the community but it is routine to see department members front and center at community events promoting and advancing causes that benefit where it is needed the most.

In addition to fundraising for Muscular Dystrophy, the Town of Banff's fire department also gets involved in various local charity events. Their volunteer firefighters take part in the annual charity golf tournament, which usually takes place in late September with area businessmen. The 'catch' to this event is the winners have to donate their winnings to a local charity of their choice. Firefighters are also involved with the yearly parade, but tend to rotate other events. For example, in 2003 the firefighters held a Boot Drive during the Labour Day long weekend in September and raised \$10,000 for the Burn Centre at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary.

"At the Volunteer Firefighters' Association meeting, our firefighters will decide on the next year's charity. Members give ideas, and then vote on which organization they will work with. We try to keep it focused on something that benefits our community," said Lorne Thompson, Deputy Fire Chief with the Town of Banff.

Lloydminster's fire chief, Todd Gustavson, says his volunteer firefighters get involved in everything from the Heart Fund's ride a bike event and the Canadian Cancer Society's Hope of Life campaign to selling calendars and history books. "We're always being asked for involvement in many different community activities," said Gustavson. "Our 30 volunteer firefighters are always ready to help out, but we try to rotate which events we'll be a part of to share our services throughout our community of 23,000."


One event that his volunteers always look forward to is the Tot Spotter Program. Working with a local real estate company that provides the stickers, firefighters hand out reflective stickers during their house inspections. These stickers can be placed in the bedrooms of the young, elderly and disabled people in the house.



Then, in the event of an incident at the location, firefighters are readily alerted.

Gustavson has also taken a different approach with funding for the Burn Society. Using statistics on the number of home inspections conducted by his volunteers, Gustavson approached city council with a request to compensate the fire department with an average of \$2 for each inspection, rounding out the number of inspections at 1,000. As

a border city, the fire department then splits that amount between the burn societies of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

“While we’re always willing to help, we also have to balance our involvement,” added Gustavson. “In addition to most of our volunteers working full time and having families, we also have to share our resources across the community. As a result, we tend to rotate many of our activities every few years.” 

NOTE: We’d love to share more ideas of the different fundraising activities of fire departments across Alberta. Please send us a contact name or information about your fundraising efforts and we’ll follow up in future issues of *Alberta Fire News*. Email us at te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca

You were asking...?

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 at (780) 415-0508 or Ray Ligenza in Calgary at (403) 297-579. Ray and Ray are technical advisors for Technical Services, Building and Fire Safety in the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs.

Q. Can the fire department inspect fireplaces being installed in homes? Usually these questions come following an installation of a fireplace and the insurance company requires an inspection to confirm correct installation.

A. The installation of a fireplace or wood-burning appliance is regulated under the Alberta Building Code. So whether this is a new building or a new installation in an existing building, the Building Code applies. Generally, the Building Safety Codes officer is the authority having jurisdiction in determining if the installation is in compliance with the ABC.

An agency known as Wood Energy Technology Transfer Inc. (WETT) is involved in the inspection and maintenance of wood burning appliances. Information about WETT is available at the following link: www.wettinc.ca/wettweb/contentshell.html

When a homeowner or an insurance company approaches the fire department to conduct a fireplace inspection, the fire department should advise them to:

- Contact the local Building Safety Codes Officer, and
- Contact WETT for individuals trained in fireplace inspections.

A fire department member should only conduct inspections of fireplaces when they have acquired the appropriate training for performing this service.


Q. In mobile camps, what is the requirement for fire alarm systems?

A. Part 10 of the Alberta Building Code regulates the requirements for fire alarm systems in a mobile camp. A mobile camp is referred to as an “Industrial Relocatable Accommodation.” Subsection 10.6.3. outlines the specific provisions for fire alarm systems in a camp. In general, a fire alarm system is required in a camp when:

- Sleeping accommodations are provided for more than 10 persons.
- Dining facilities can accommodate more than 100 persons.
- Recreational facilities accommodate more than 150 persons.

Q. What is required when the camp is relocated?

A. When a mobile camp is relocated, the provisions of Sections 10.6 and 10.7 of the Alberta Building Code apply. Relocation requirements are discussed in a STANDATA bulletin available on the AMA web site: www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco/ss/PDF_index/00IBindex.cfm

Details are found in the Alberta Building Code STANDATA 97-IB-003R2 “Mobile Homes, Manufactured Homes and Industrial Relocatable Accommodation.” 

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

Committee establishing unified voice

A key theme in a recent review of the province's safety system was Alberta's fire services. Stakeholder feedback included developing a vision for fire services in Alberta and forging stronger partnerships with fire departments, industry and government. This resulted in the creation of the Alberta Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC), which provides counsel to the Minister of Alberta Municipal Affairs on fire related issues in Alberta.

The committee's aim is to establish a clear vision, provide leadership to facilitate co-operation and efficiency and address the challenges facing every community in the delivery of fire and emergency services, as well as the demands for new capabilities for emergency management and disaster response.

Two of the committee's top priorities are communication and accessibility

to ensure that the entire Alberta fire service is an active player in FSAC activities. Imperative is the opportunity for all stakeholders to provide input into the committee's procedures and actions. Meeting minutes are posted on the Fire Commissioner's Office website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco and important information will be mailed directly to all fire departments, professional and volunteer associations (including industrial and private), government agencies, First Nations, municipalities and the municipal associations that are stakeholders of the Alberta fire service.

As well, updates will be included in the FCO's newsletter, *Alberta Fire News*. Other methods of communication are also being considered.

Equally important is accessibility to the committee. Through public meetings and forums, as well as coordinating with other scheduled events, the Committee is striving for as much face-to-face communication as possible with fire service representatives. As well, the FSAC

Update

The Advisory Committee organized a series of five regional Technical Working Group meetings throughout Alberta between March 24 and April 3. Specific locations were Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Calgary and Peace River. A request for participation in these regional meetings was sent by Fire Commissioner Pat Graham to all fire chiefs on March 8th. The request emphasized the importance of providing input into the definition of Alberta Fire Services for inclusion in amendments to the province's *Safety Codes Act*. A temporary website (between March 22nd to April 6th) was established to gather input from those unable to attend the regional meetings.




Members of the Fire Services Advisory Committee at a February 2004 meeting in Edmonton

can be contacted through the FCO by mail, telephone, fax or e-mail during regular business hours at:

Fire Commissioner's Office
16th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4L4
Phone: (780) 427-8392
Fax: (780) 427-5898
E-mail: firecomm@gov.ab.ca

Toll free, after-hours Emergency
Number: 1-877-427-8393

As well, any information sent to a committee member will be forwarded to the Committee Chair. 

For more information about the committee, please visit the website address mentioned above, which includes a complete listing of FSAC members, committee accountability, structure and reporting details as well as committee meeting minutes.

Digest

Oops ... we goofed

In the December issue of *Alberta Fire News*, one of our Digest items had an incorrect title that may have misled readers. While the paragraph under the title "New Fire Chief for Rocky Mountain House" correctly identified Cammie Laird as the new Regional Fire Chief for Rocky Mountain House, the title misrepresented her new position. Archie Richardson remains the Fire Chief for Rocky Mountain House, a position he has held for the last four years. We apologize for any confusion.

Joint training on aboriginal awareness

The Fire Commissioner's Office and **fire etc.** recently attended an Aboriginal Awareness Session in Vermilion. Put together by **fire etc.'s** Judy Harvey, this was an excellent opportunity for staff from both organizations to jointly learn how to work better with one of our important client groups. Two sessions were held, spanning two days each, which allowed for the continuation of operations and access to the training by all staff. The sessions provided valuable insights into Aboriginal issues and an opportunity for our staff members to interact and network.

Former Alberta fire chief becomes B.C. Fire Commissioner

Dave Hodgins, formerly with the Edmonton and Strathcona County fire departments, has been appointed British Columbia's new Fire Commissioner.

Alberta fire service activities calendar – 2004

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
Summer Fire Safety Campaign	May 1 - September 1	(see the FCO website for details)
SW Alberta Family Safety Day	Pending TBA June	Lethbridge Exhibition Grounds
Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Conference	June 13 - 17	Red Deer
Fire Service Exemplary Service Medals Ceremony (Edmonton Fire Dept.)	June 17 & 24	Edmonton – City Hall
Hose Coupling Competition	July 10 (tentative date)	Claresholm
Hose Coupling Competition	July 24	Myrnam
Provincial Hose Coupling Competition	August 13 - 14	Camrose
Beaumont Safety Fair	May 29	Beaumont

Solving a mystery?

One of the videos from the old Labour Library has gone missing, and we need your help to track it down. If you know of the whereabouts of *Every Second Counts* please notify Meredith Day, Library Technician, Alberta Corporate Service Centre at (780) 415-0576. Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Retiring but staying involved

Lyle Birnie, Fire Chief for the Town of Westlock, is retiring at the end of June but he's still planning to stay involved. Lyle has been a member of the editorial board of *Alberta Fire News* since 1986 and has agreed to continue serving on the board after his retirement. (A profile of Lyle's 30-year career is on page 24)

Calling all badges ...

All fire departments – please send in a badge for inclusion on the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office fire department badge display board. To make this display a true representation, we need a badge from every fire department in Alberta. While we have received many badges from across the province, not all fire departments in Alberta are represented on our display. Please send your department's badge to: Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office 16th Floor, Commerce Place 10155-102 Street Edmonton, AB T5J 4L4

If you're in Edmonton, drop by the office for a cup of coffee and a chat, and have a look at the badge display prominently showcased in our front foyer area.

Bookmark FCO's website

If you're looking for updates or the latest in fire service-related information, make your first stop the Fire Commissioner's website. New information and updates are added/replaced on a regular basis and FCO publications are available electronically through the website. Some of the information currently on our site includes:

- Fire Reporting Manual and PDF fillable fire report forms
- 2002 Statistical Report
- Job postings
- "How to Operate a Fire Department" manual

Note: if you have a position available in your organization, we encourage you to post the details free of charge on our website.

Check it out at:
www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco



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Westlock's fire chief retires but continues as *Alberta Fire News* board member

Upon reaching the 30 year mark in his career with the fire service, Westlock's fire chief Lyle Birnie retires from active duty, but continues his affiliation with *Alberta Fire News*. Provided below is an overview of Birnie's years of service.

After one year on the waiting list, Lyle Birnie's fire service career started in June 1974 as a probationary member of the Westlock Volunteer Fire Department. Six months later he was voted in and given the job of secretary treasurer; six months after that, after completing Part I and II firefighting courses, Lyle was promoted to captain. In May 1982, town council appointed Lyle as its volunteer fire chief, then hired him as a full time paid fire chief for the Town of Westlock in May 1991.

Lyle admits to many fond memories of his 30 years as a firefighter. During his first five years, Lyle and his colleagues competed in at least five hose coupling competitions annually along with the provincial event. Although his team never won the provincial trophy they placed second and third many times. "The camaraderie and friendship over the years is something I will always remember," said Lyle. "As well, the support of my family has been great."

In addition to playing a key role in Westlock's fire department, Lyle was involved in various other organizations, including the local Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Fish and Game association, the curling club and currently serves as the president of the local snowmobile club. He also sat on the Safety Codes Council (fire discipline) for five years.



Westlock fire chief Lyle Birnie, retiring after 30 years with the fire service

Lyle's retirement plans include continuing to help with fire prevention activities in the schools, more fishing, golfing and his woodworking hobby as well as staying on the editorial board of *Alberta Fire News*, which he's been involved with for almost 20 years. "I believe I have contributed my share to make the community a better place to live," said Lyle. "I'm looking forward to retirement, mainly for a change in routine and the opportunity to focus on my areas of interest, which also includes the fire service." 🔥

