

# Alberta FIRE NEWS

May 2002

Vol. 23 Number 1

*Fire Commissioner's Office expands*

## Changing the way of doing business...

Nowadays, several organizations are looking closely at their practices and determining ways to improve processes, create efficiencies and better define what they do. It's normal practice now for many businesses. But, it's also becoming a regular way of life for those in the fire service. Beginning with this issue, *Fire News* is focusing on changes taking place in the fire service industry. Our first article highlights some major changes in the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO).

### What's changing at the FCO?

We've already told you about Pat Graham becoming the new Fire Commissioner in the December issue of *Fire News*, but since then the FCO has been busy with the reorganization and refinement of duties and priorities. The transfer of six staff from the Safety Services Division of Municipal Affairs to the Fire Commissioner's Office also meant redefining the responsibilities of the FCO.

With the new title of fire safety officer, these six staff from the field (originally nine but three retired on March 31, 2002) will continue to oversee various aspects of fire prevention and service across the province, including investigations, inspections and safety code compliance. The six staff include Ed Pomerleau, Edmonton area; Ross Bennett, Peace area; Tom O'Gorman and Frank Harris,



*Some members of the new team in the Fire Commissioner's Office.*

*Front (L-R): Ray Schweitzer, Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Pat Graham, Tom O' Gorman, Terry Laboucane  
Back (L-R): Wayne Girven, George Hands, Gordon Cairney, Ed Pomerleau, Kevan Jess, Frank Harris*

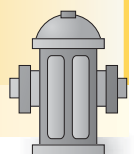
Red Deer area; George Hands, Calgary area; and Kevan Jess, Lethbridge area. All six fire safety officers will continue to work in their assigned areas but report to the FCO. Three other members, Ray Schweitzer from Calgary, Gordon Cairney from Peace River and Terry Laboucane from St. Paul, retired from the Government of Alberta on March 31, 2002.

In addition to the title of fire safety officer, two other titles—deputy fire commissioner and assistant fire commissioner will also be introduced. According to fire commissioner Pat Graham, these working titles are recognized terminology that brings FCO staff in line with the reporting structure of fire departments.

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# Gearing up for fire season

As we move into the high season for grass fires, dry conditions have increased the risk of wildfire in parts of the province.

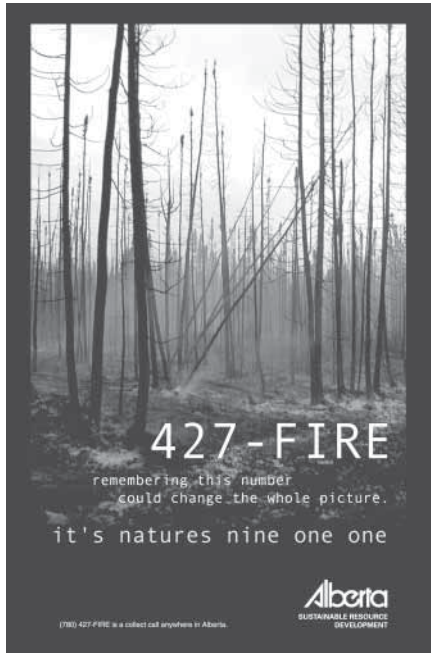
Because of these conditions, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) launched its wildfire suppression operations in March, one month earlier than in the past.

Wildfires in forested areas and grasslands are especially a concern when they burn near residential, industrial or agricultural developments. Residents of Fort McMurray, Hinton, Bragg Creek and

Swan Hills, for example, have all experienced the consequences of wildfires. According to ASRD, in the last three years,

over 1,300 human-caused and 2,500 lightning-ignited wildfires burned more than 862,000 hectares in Alberta.

Most people know to be careful with matches and cigarettes and to follow safe burning practices when cleaning up garbage and debris. Listed below are additional steps that homeowners in wildland or grassland settings can take to safeguard their homes against wildfire.



## Steps to safeguard your home

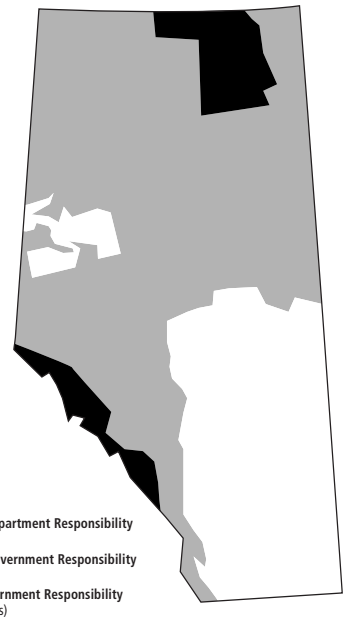
- Clear roof and gutters of needles and leaves.
- Keep the area within 10 metres of buildings free of flammable vegetation. This fuel-free zone provides firefighters with a defensible space to assist in stopping a wildfire's spread.
- Plant less flammable vegetation like Aspen, Birch, Poplar and the Western Larch beyond the 10-metre defensible zone.
- Situate firewood, combustible debris, wooden outbuildings and fences at least 10 metres from buildings.
- Locate burning barrels at least 15 metres from buildings or flammable material. Barrels should be screened to control sparks.
- Keep vegetation and combustible material away from propane tanks.
- Contact your utility company to clear vegetation within a tree length of overhead power lines.
- Keep firefighting tools on hand. A shovel, rake, sprinkler, roof-top ladder and hose that reaches to the roof are essential.



Additional tips and information are provided on the Fire Commissioner's Office web site at: [www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco](http://www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco)

## Fire protection/ suppression outside municipal boundaries

About 60 per cent of Alberta is covered in forest, most of it in what is designated the Forest Protection Area, a vast area of land owned mainly by the provincial government. Under the *Forest and Prairie Fire Protection Act*, responsibility for fire prevention and suppression in the Forest Protection Area is provided through the Forest Protection Division of Alberta Sustainable Resources and Development.



In addition to fire prevention and suppression activities within the Forest Protection Area boundaries, the division also assists other firefighters as necessary. According to Jules Leboeuf, fire prevention officer with the Forest Protection Division, "our wildfire specialists are often called upon to help municipalities in their fire suppression efforts. Any municipality can make a request for assistance, and depending on priorities in the province, our crews and equipment will be deployed."

While the crews usually work in consultation with municipal fire departments, under the Act, the Forest Protection



# Fireplay and firesetting by children and teens

Division has the authority to dispatch crews to fight a fire whether a request is made or not. "Open fire is open fire," notes Leboeuf, "and our first priority is to protect Alberta's forests from wildfire."

Historically, the Forest Protection Division relied heavily on ground firefighters in its Fire Suppression Program. However, due to new technology and equipment, and the closer integration of aerial and ground firefighting systems, the division has made major changes in its firefighting resources.

The division now has a range of wildland firefighting crews, from initial attack crews to helitack (helicopter based) crews with rappel capability and sustained action crews that work a specific period during the fire season. The most recent addition, in 2000, were the helitack support crews. These eight-person crews are Type 1 trained, Edmonton-based and, like the rapattack crews, are moved throughout the province as hazard or risk dictate. Primarily used as rapid support crews for either rapattack or helitack, they are also set up for night operations, campaign fires and initial attack if required.

Forest Protection Division uses a variety of aircraft for suppressing forest fires, including helicopters and rotary-wing aircraft. Helicopters are widely used on direct and indirect fire suppression and are used to transport men and equipment to and from forest fires. They also drop water or foam directly on a fire perimeter to control and aid in extinguishing the fire. The helicopters usually work with firefighters on the ground to increase the effectiveness of the firefighters.

Another element in Alberta's initial attack arsenal is the airtanker. Airtankers are divided into nine groups as part of a provincial fleet, which can be dispatched to any location in the province to fight wildfires. Airtankers are used primarily for initial attack, to hold the fire from spreading until ground forces are brought in to extinguish them.

For more information about fire bans and the Forest Protection Division, visit the web site: <http://envweb.env.gov.ab.ca/env/forests/fpd>

Fireplay and firesetting by children and teens result in substantial personal and economic loss. Surprisingly, little is known about the development of fire-related behaviours in children. What is known indicates that playing with matches and lighters is common among school-aged children, and can persist into adolescence.

Firesetting with malicious intent, or "pathological" firesetting appears to occur less frequently than fireplay, and is often assumed to be associated with age: teenagers are assumed to engage in malicious firesetting, while younger children are assumed to engage in fireplay. This is reflected in standard statistic-collecting methods, such as those used in provinces across Canada. Typically these methods define fires started by children under 12 years of age as accidental "fireplay" while fires started by youth 12 years of age and older are classified as intentional "vandalism" or "arson." This way of thinking has not helped the field move forward as much as possible.

## Firesetting facts

- From 1990-1999, fireplay caused 2,301 fires, 21 deaths, 360 injuries and more than \$31.5 million in losses in Alberta.
- During the same period, incendiary or set fires caused 23 deaths, 380 injuries and more than \$181.8 million in losses in the province.
- From 1995-1999, only 25% of arsons resulted in charges, but 45% of those who were charged were youth.
- 1997 findings of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation indicate that 50% of intentionally set fires are set by youth.

Check out these useful web sites:  
[www.sosfires.com](http://www.sosfires.com)  
[www.kidsandfire.com](http://www.kidsandfire.com)  
[www.fireproofchildren.com](http://www.fireproofchildren.com)

Unfortunately, whether children and teens understand the consequences or not does not change the dangerousness of the behaviour. There is some evidence to suggest that even very young children can engage in "pathological" firesetting. Many children and teens who engage in firesetting do so repeatedly, starting with fireplay when they are young children. This suggests that fire involvement by young children, regardless of intention, provides the best opportunity to intervene before the behaviour escalates, and should not be ignored when planning programs to reduce juvenile firesetting.

The causes of fire involvement by children and teens are also not well understood. Research shows that children who are involved with fire tend to have many other difficulties as well. These difficulties can include learning problems and school failure, family problems, including family violence, problems with friends, and problems with managing their own behaviour, such as difficulties with inattention, impulsivity, anger and aggression. In addition, the parents of firesetters have been found to have troubles with effective parenting, substance abuse, and psychiatric difficulties. From the mental health perspective, firesetting is considered a "red flag" behaviour, because children who are involved with fire are more likely to have serious behaviour problems that continue over time.

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## Fireplay and firesetting by children and teens

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Interest in fire and fire-related activities is also thought to contribute to childhood fire involvement. High levels of fire interest have been found among children and teens who are involved with fire, and extreme fire interest likely plays a role in repeated involvement with fire.

Interestingly, fire knowledge, including fire safety knowledge and knowledge about the dangerousness of fire, does not seem to be related to fire involvement by children and teens. In fact, one study even found that child firesetters may actually have better knowledge about things that burn than non-firesetters! Other things that may contribute to fire involvement by children and teens include peer pressure and exposure to inappropriate adult models of fire involvement. And of course, all forms of fire involvement require access to fire-starting materials and opportunities to use those materials.

There are many different intervention programs available for children and teens involved with fire. A search of the web reveals that most community-based programs involve fire service professionals, fire safety education, risk assessments, and the possibility of referral to other agencies for service. Some programs also include mental health professionals, law enforcement professionals, burn unit staff, and teachers, or other professionals associated with the education system. Most programs aim to evaluate a firesetter's needs and address those needs through a brief intervention with the firesetter, his/her parents, or a combination of both. Many programs are community-specific, although there appear to be a growing number of province/state-wide efforts, and even inter-state/inter-province coalitions being established to share expertise and resources in addressing the juvenile firesetting problem.

Repeat firesetting rates reported by a number of programs suggest that some of these interventions are quite effective, although scientifically rigorous evaluations are notably infrequent.

What is clear from all of the information that is available about fire involvement by children and teens, is that juvenile firesetters are likely to need a variety of plans to help individual children, teens and families. Families need the support of their communities, and communities need to accept responsibility for providing the best service possible to families in need. Through working together, families, professionals, agencies and communities can help keep children safe from fire. 🔥

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### Statistics on fire loss in Alberta last year

## Nearly \$193 million lost to fire in 2001

As of March 25, 2002, a total of 6,447 fires resulting in 37 deaths, 368 injuries, and \$192,792,537 in property damage were recorded for 2001 in the Fire Statistics Information System at the Fire Commissioner's Office. (See Table 1)

Fire deaths in the year 2001 increased by 32 per cent from the 2000 total of 28. Fatalities included: 21 men, 12 women and four children under 16 years of age. The causes of fatal fires were: smoking (10); motor vehicle crash (5); ignition of natural gas or gasoline (4); electrical wiring (3); child playing with match/lighter or stove (2); cooking (2); arson (1); combustibles placed close to a space heater (1); and unknown causes (9).

| Year  | Fires | Deaths | Injuries | Property Loss   |
|-------|-------|--------|----------|-----------------|
| 1992  | 6882  | 25     | 448      | \$103,587,506   |
| 1993  | 6735  | 36     | 491      | \$103,320,281   |
| 1994  | 6897  | 25     | 490      | \$110,138,438   |
| 1995  | 6528  | 37     | 424      | \$111,140,466   |
| 1996  | 6304  | 41     | 451      | \$120,556,379   |
| 1997  | 6670  | 37     | 448      | \$141,960,034   |
| 1998  | 6579  | 20     | 429      | \$139,516,846   |
| 1999  | 6380  | 51     | 385      | \$146,396,201   |
| 2000  | 6417  | 28     | 341      | \$157,338,843   |
| 2001  | 6447  | 37     | 368      | \$192,792,537   |
| Total | 65839 | 337    | 4275     | \$1,326,747,531 |



Of the 337 injuries, 22% were to firefighters and 78% to civilians. Of the civilians, 24 were children, 76 were women and 189 were men. The major causes of fires where injuries occurred in both firefighters and civilians were: cooking (17%); smoking (12%); heating equipment (12%); arson/set fires (8%); candles (5%); electrical wiring (5%); flammable/combustible gas/liquid ignition (4%); and child fireplay (3%).

Fire losses by major property classes are shown in Table 2. The special property-transportation equipment category comprising mainly ground transport vehicles and outdoor properties accounted for the largest number of fires (48%) followed by residential properties (27%). The majority of fire deaths (31), injuries (208) and property losses (\$67 million) occurred in residential properties.


Homes representing one/two family dwellings, apartments and mobile homes accounted for 1,632 or 92% of residential properties (Table 3), and these fires are further analyzed below.

The major causes of home fires in Alberta for 2001 are presented in Table 4. The top six known causes of home fires were related to cooking, smoking, arson/set fire, home heating, electrical, exposure, candles and child fireplay.

| Fire losses by major property classes |       |     |        |          |               | Table 2 |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----|--------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Property class                        | Fires | %   | Deaths | Injuries | Property loss |         |
| Transportation equipment              | 3,126 | 48  | 5      | 56       | \$27,164,608  |         |
| Residential                           | 1,772 | 27  | 31     | 208      | \$67,873,924  |         |
| Miscellaneous                         | 717   | 11  | 0      | 14       | \$13,382,442  |         |
| Storage                               | 370   | 6   | 1      | 16       | \$20,004,779  |         |
| Assembly                              | 160   | 2   | 0      | 10       | \$5,922,932   |         |
| Industrial manufacturing              | 122   | 2   | 0      | 38       | \$42,583,330  |         |
| Mercantile                            | 112   | 2   | 0      | 14       | \$10,852,138  |         |
| Business & personal service           | 29    | 0   | 0      | 2        | \$4,761,974   |         |
| Institutional                         | 28    | 0   | 0      | 9        | \$136,170     |         |
| Unkown                                | 11    | 0   | 0      | 1        | \$110,240     |         |
| Total                                 | 6,447 | 100 | 37     | 368      | \$192,792,537 |         |

| Fire losses in homes: 1992 - 2001 |       |        |          |               | Table 3 |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Type of home                      | Fires | Deaths | Injuries | Property loss |         |
| One/two family dwellings          | 1,154 | 20     | 125      | \$47,756,32   |         |
| Apartments                        | 377   | 7      | 62       | \$13,638,546  |         |
| Mobile homes                      | 101   | 3      | 11       | \$3,532,071   |         |
| Total                             | 1,632 | 30     | 198      | \$64,926,938  |         |

Smoke alarms were installed in only 56% of Alberta homes that experienced fires in 2001. Of these only 39% activated during fires. Where alarms did not activate 33%

were due to lack of a power source-no battery (16%); dead battery (7%); electricity off (4%); and electricity not connected (6%). 

| Major causes of home fires 2001 |       |            |        |             |          |               |              |                | Table 4 |
|---------------------------------|-------|------------|--------|-------------|----------|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------|
| Fire causes                     | Fires | % of fires | Deaths | % of deaths | Injuries | % of injuries | \$ losses    | % of \$ losses |         |
| Smoking                         | 242   | 15         | 10     | 33          | 37       | 19            | \$13,923,359 | 21             |         |
| Other causes/unknown            | 240   | 15         | 11     | 37          | 25       | 13            | \$14,305,872 | 22             |         |
| Other cooking                   | 217   | 13         | 0      | 0           | 27       | 14            | \$4,628,701  | 7              |         |
| Arson/set fire                  | 189   | 12         | 1      | 3           | 17       | 9             | \$6,040,949  | 9              |         |
| Heating equipment related       | 156   | 10         | 2      | 7           | 24       | 12            | \$6,860,751  | 11             |         |
| Overheated cooking oil fire     | 133   | 8          | 1      | 3           | 29       | 15            | \$1,809,036  | 3              |         |
| Electrical distrib. equipment   | 109   | 7          | 3      | 10          | 7        | 4             | \$6,709,009  | 10             |         |
| Exposure fire                   | 105   | 6          | 0      | 0           | 0        | 0             | \$3,919,433  | 6              |         |
| Candle (accident)               | 96    | 6          | 0      | 0           | 17       | 9             | \$2,754,284  | 4              |         |
| Child fireplay                  | 76    | 5          | 2      | 7           | 12       | 6             | \$2,700,504  | 4              |         |
| Appliance/equipment related     | 28    | 2          | 0      | 0           | 3        | 2             | \$868,336    | 1              |         |
| Total                           | 1,632 | 100        | 30     | 100         | 198      | 100           | \$64,926,938 | 100            |         |

For further information on fire statistics, call the Fire Commissioner's Office at: (780) 415-0546.



# Edmonton Dangerous Goods Response Team

In 2001, the Edmonton Fire Department received approximately 3,000 calls for the Dangerous Goods Response Team, more than triple the number of calls usually received. The Anthrax scares that overwhelmed the United States and Canada were one indication of the changing face of firefighting. "This is the future of firefighting," said one graduate of the dangerous goods course, "and the need for this type of work will continue to grow."



Captain Jim Shinn of the Dangerous Goods Team helping a trainee get ready to enter the decontamination unit.

Since 1987, the Edmonton Fire Department has been training firefighters for the Dangerous Goods Response Team. The training was initiated because the fire department was being asked to respond to chemical emergencies but lacked proper training to do so. In addition, industry response teams were dealing with chemical emergencies with a response time that only promised to handle the spills or problems within six hours. This lengthy time span and the lack of proper firefighter training was a concern. As a result, the City of Edmonton established the Dangerous Goods Response Team.

The team is trained by Dangerous Goods Technical Advisor Dr. Uwe Terner. Terner has been organizing this course since its inception and believes the training is among the best in Canada. The course is 10-12 weeks long and involves an intense course schedule of chemistry, biology, toxicology and environmental issues. Also covered in the course are response procedures and practical training involving detonating a bomb, transporting dangerous goods, and identifying various explosives.

The program offered by Edmonton has been used as a basis for the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marines and the International Association of Firefighters programs. According to Lieutenant Barry Lamb, a recent graduate of the training, "This course is quite an eye-opener. It is the start of an ongoing learning process that won't be completed until the end of my career as a firefighter."

The Dangerous Goods Team includes more than 100 members, of which 48 are in active service on the team at any given time. The course is available to any firefighter within the department who has been working for three years and to members of outside groups like the military or non-Edmonton firefighters. Typically, the training has been held on an irregular basis, but the intention is to now start holding the course every year.

With priorities shifting to include mutual aid response, the team may be called upon to respond to any dangerous goods situation north of Red Deer. This makes regular training a necessity to maintain a sufficient number of Edmonton firefighters to keep the team operational. According to Terner, another 20 fully trained dangerous goods technicians would be optimal.

The City of Edmonton is a leader in preparing for changes in firefighting. Since 1992, the Edmonton Emergency Response Department has been home to one of the best engineered, designed and equipped decontamination trailers in Canada, and

probably North America. This unit is equipped with an on-board computer-based information system, a chemical library, numerous pieces of detection equipment, and devices to stop leaks and act as absorbents. The Edmonton team is in the process of moving its headquarters to Station Number Two, located downtown. This move will enable the team to work out of a central location and focus entirely on dangerous goods, including training, managing and organizing the team.

According to Terner, the City of Edmonton is proactively responding to dangerous goods issues by having the team in place. The City of Edmonton and area is the largest chemical manufacturing area in Canada and the second largest in North America. Having a team like this is critical for the safety of everyone in responding to potential chemical emergencies. 🔥

## *Edmonton's first female dangerous goods graduate*

This year, Terner graduated his 10<sup>th</sup> dangerous goods class. Among the graduates was the first female firefighter to take the course. Firefighter Shannon McKay, a six-year firefighting veteran says she took the training to further her knowledge, explore a different avenue of the job and better herself as a member of the department. McKay is one of only five female firefighters in the City of Edmonton, which may explain why it has taken 10 dangerous goods courses before the first female graduated. However, being a female on the dangerous goods team does have its advantages. "When we have to decontaminate Anthrax victims," says McKay, "it's helpful to have a woman on the team. If I was being decontaminated, I'd prefer to have a female colleague in there."



# Ground zero... an Alberta perspective

We all watched on television the horror that took place on September 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center in New York City. However, actually being at Ground Zero was an even more sombre experience, says Bruce Gray, Urban Search and Rescue Coordinator for the Calgary Fire Department.

Gray, five fellow firefighters and one firefighter union representative had the opportunity to tour the full effect of the terrorist attacks during their week-long trip to New York City in January 2002.

According to Gray, who has also sat in on critiques of the search and rescue efforts at the Pentagon and at the Oklahoma bombing, from the moment they arrived in New York, they started to get a sense of the dramatic impact on firefighters. "At the first fire hall we visited, where six crew members were lost, there was a real sense of things not being normal," said Gray.

And when they went to Ground Zero, that feeling was reinforced. "None of the crew was talking. There was a very eerie feeling and the hair on the back of my neck was standing up," added Gray. It was also the day that another body, later identified as a Port Authority official, was unearthed.

Being at Ground Zero gives you a real sense of the devastation that took place, said Gray. "It's like a giant plate of spaghetti, except the spaghetti is wires, steel tubing, etcetera, all mashed together. Huge machines reach in, paw away at the debris and move one bucketful at a time to another spot. Half a dozen firefighters are near every machine and immediately start working through each pile as it is dropped."



From the left: Mark Faires, Jim Miller, Don Wilson, Al Magwood, Capt. Joe Downey (FDNY), Bruce Gray, Mark Turik, Jim Magwood. Photo is by Leah Hennel of the Calgary Herald.

While there, Gray and his colleagues met Joe Downey, son of Fire Chief Ray Downey, who was killed while responding to the initial attack. "Ray Downey was a colleague of our fire chief, Wayne Morris. In fact, Ray was instrumental in setting up the heavy rescue team in Calgary. We wanted to show our respect by meeting with his son, who is also a firefighter in New York, and presenting him with our department's flag," said Gray.

It was an extreme learning experience, notes Gray, despite the fact that the group was told up front that they wouldn't be doing any "hands on" work. "It certainly showed us what we could be up against. We questioned them on how they responded, what happened to their command station (which was decimated) and how they regrouped."

In addition to providing valuable information to the Calgary Fire Department, the week's visit also validated the program and procedures that are in place,

said Gray. "It's reassuring to know that our urban search and rescue program is in good shape, and in some areas we're even more advanced, such as in our critical incident debriefing, respiratory protection and safety procedures. While we hope to never have an incident like New York, we do know that the citizens of Calgary will be well protected."

Since returning to Calgary, the crew has put their experience to good use. Gray gave a presentation to the Alberta Search and Rescue Association and to the Calgary Fire Department's Fire Chiefs Committee. Other team members have also visited schools to share some of the information and assure children that Calgary firefighters are well trained and have the resources to handle extraordinary circumstances. 🔥

# Carrying out a balancing act

The most current statistics from the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office indicate that 388 of Alberta's 430 fire departments are made up of volunteer firefighters. That means that approximately 8,500 firefighters across the province juggle the demands of their jobs with fire training, suppression and education activities in their communities.

Most employers are very understanding, recognizing that employees who serve on the fire department are also giving back to their community. According to Rex Dawson, owner of Rex Dawson Ford in Westlock, "everyone has an obligation to

*"Whatever we can do to be a good community organization we're prepared to do."*

Norris Bernier,  
Western Distribution Manager for Home Hardware

help out somewhere along the line." Dawson says he's done volunteer work all his life and has put "tons of hours" into community league work himself. "We know volunteers are necessary. It doesn't affect business every day, but it sure helps the community."

One of Dawson's employees, Glenn Ward, a firefighter with both the Town of Clyde and the Town of Westlock fire departments, actually spent considerable time away from work when dealing with the May 2001 fire in the Clyde/Nestow area. "With the first call, we worked 28 hours straight," said Ward. "In total, I put in about 40 hours that week fighting the fire." According to Ward, his employer was quite understanding. "He's very good about it." Ward says that sometimes responding to a lot of little calls can be an inconvenience, more for him than for his employer, because it impacts his ability to service customers' vehicles, but he's never had any hassles from his employer.

Many volunteer fire departments maintain a congenial relationship with local businesses. "We try to build a relationship with the business," says Ken Carlson, fire chief for the County of Wetaskiwin. "Most employers are usually quite considerate, but it does become a strain when there are a lot of fire activities."

Nearby, City of Wetaskiwin fire chief Mitch Carson knows, first hand, the strain that many activities place on both firefighters and their employers. "This past year we had 227 fires, which is a fire more than every other day," said Carson. "In addition to the number of calls, our members also attend weekly training sessions plus extra training on weekends for many of them. Additionally, our firefighters are involved in school visits, presentations, etcetera, creating considerable impact on a firefighter/employee's time. It can be totally consuming."

In the City of Wetaskiwin, Home Hardware has the largest complement of staff who are firefighters. Currently six of Home Hardware's Wetaskiwin staff belong to the Wetaskiwin volunteer fire department and two of their Camrose staff belong to the Camrose volunteer fire department. According to Norris Bernier, Western Distribution Manager for Home Hardware, "whatever we can do to be a good community organization we're prepared to do." With last year's heightened fire activity, Bernier said that they worked around the firefighter staff calls to action. "All of the staff kicked in and did a little bit

extra to cover off. Then when the members came back, they were lightly razed by the staff." In the past Bernier has had more staff who were firefighters and says that he has no problem with employees volunteering for the fire department. "I'd hate for something to go wrong and not have adequate fire protection in the community," said Bernier.

Penny Bilodeau, Assistant Manager of Champion Feeds in Westlock, says there is great value in having staff who are trained as firefighters. "It's really comforting to management to know that there's someone on staff with knowledge about fire safety," says Bilodeau. She also acknowledges that having direct contact with the fire department through her two firefighting staff has been really beneficial. "They are the ones who suggested having the fire department tour the facility and they are the ones who arranged for a fire extinguisher course," said Bilodeau.

According to Bilodeau, there is only one drawback to two of her staff being firefighters—she can't put them both on the same shift. However, she is quick to point out that the benefits far outweigh any inconveniences.

Many of the volunteer fire departments include a question on the application form about the applicant's employer. For example, the Westlock Fire Department's application form includes the question: "Is your employer willing to allow you time to respond to emergency calls?"

As Westlock fire chief Lyle Bernie says, "we don't want hard feelings with the employer. We want to ensure that they're

*"It's really comforting to management to know that there's someone on staff with knowledge about fire safety."*

Penny Bilodeau,  
Assistant Manager of Champion Feeds in Westlock





aware that one of their staff has put in an application or is already a member of the fire department.”

In small fire departments, firefighters are often owners of their own business, which makes it especially hard for them to leave their job for an extended period of time. Regardless of the size or location of the volunteer fire department, if the firefighter is a key person in the business and his absence impacts the work of others, that makes it difficult too. “In some cases the employer says no, but they are usually quite considerate,” says County of Wetaskiwin fire chief Carlson. “In all my years with the fire service, I’ve only had about half a dozen times where the employer wasn’t pleased.”

The increase in last year’s fires in Wetaskiwin certainly created challenges for both firefighters and their employers, said City of Wetaskiwin fire chief Carson. “There is a strain on the system when there’s lots of activity and last spring placed a very high demand on our firefighters’ time,” he said. “But our city council and business community are fantastic. Fortunately, the businesses in town recognized the important work of our firefighters and allowed them the necessary time away from work.”

In recognition of everyone’s efforts, the City of Wetaskiwin sent letters of thanks to all the businesses that had firefighters on staff. As Bernier from Home Hardware points out, “it certainly wasn’t expected, but it was a really nice touch.”

The volunteers were also honoured by council and presented with a plaque. “Firefighting is a large commitment,” said Carson, “but they love it.” 🔥

## A branch primer

# Getting to know Disaster Services Branch

Disaster Services is a branch of the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs responsible for ensuring Alberta’s communities are prepared to respond effectively to disasters and major emergencies. The branch has five operational sections: Provincial Programs, Community Programs, Training Programs, Industrial Programs and Business Resumption Planning.

- ◆ **Provincial Programs** is responsible for emergency planning and preparedness at the provincial order of government. Provincial plans are based on the all-hazards Alberta Emergency Plan, with hazard specific plans such as the Pandemic Influenza Support Plan, the Foreign Animal Disease Eradication Plan, the Critical Pest Infestation Eradication Plan and the Catastrophic British Columbia Earthquake Support Plan. Provincial Programs also liaises with other provinces and the federal government, maintains a state of readiness at the Government Emergency Operation Centre (GEOC), and manages disaster recovery programs that help Albertans recover from the adverse effects of a disastrous event.
- ◆ **Community Programs** is responsible for validating municipal emergency plans. Six district officers work closely with municipalities to maintain preparedness, response and recovery abilities, and to help them evaluate and validate their municipal emergency plans. There are also two First Nations district officers who work with Alberta’s First Nations communities. During major emergencies or disasters, the district officers work with the communities at their emergency operation centres and provide a liaison between the municipalities and the provincial government should provincial or other resources be required.
- ◆ **Training Programs** develops and maintains the standards for emergency preparedness training programs, and administers the disaster services training grant program. The grant program provides funding for disaster services training and ground search and rescue training. Training Programs also administers the attendance of Albertans at the federal Canadian Emergency Preparedness College in Ontario.
- ◆ **Industrial Programs** is responsible for maintaining the two emergency plans that deal with industrial hazards. They are the Dangerous Goods Incident Support Plan and the Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan. Other activities include working with industrial/municipal mutual aid groups and reviewing industrial emergency plans to ensure they are compatible with and complementary to the relevant municipal emergency plan.
- ◆ **Business Resumption Planning** assists government departments with the development, validation and maintenance of cross-government business resumptions plans to ensure the continued availability of vital services and programs. 🔥



Alberta Disaster Services management team:  
Seated L-R: Marion Boon (Training Programs),  
Ron Wolsey (Executive Director)  
Standing L-R: Dave Redman (Community  
Programs), Barry Mclean (Business Resumption  
Planning), Pat Henneberry (Provincial Programs),  
Ralph Holmes (Industrial Programs)

training and ground search and rescue training. Training Programs also administers the attendance of Albertans at the federal Canadian Emergency Preparedness College in Ontario.

- ◆ **Industrial Programs** is responsible for maintaining the two emergency plans that deal with industrial hazards. They are the Dangerous Goods Incident Support Plan and the Upstream Petroleum Incident Support Plan. Other activities include working with industrial/municipal mutual aid groups and reviewing industrial emergency plans to ensure they are compatible with and complementary to the relevant municipal emergency plan.
- ◆ **Business Resumption Planning** assists government departments with the development, validation and maintenance of cross-government business resumptions plans to ensure the continued availability of vital services and programs. 🔥

For more information contact:  
**Disaster Services Branch**  
Alberta Municipal Affairs  
16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Commerce Place, 10155 - 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4J4  
Tel: 780-422-9000 Fax: 780-422-1549  
[www.gov.ab.ca/ma/ds](http://www.gov.ab.ca/ma/ds)



# Ensuring a strong presence in the community

Often referred to as the best kept secret of the Rocky Mountains, the Town of Grande Cache is a small community of 4,500 residents located on Highway 40, a relaxing scenic drive midway between Hinton and Grande Prairie on the northwest boundary of Willmore Wilderness Park. The Weyerhaeuser lumber mill and the minimum-security correctional institution serve as the town's two main employers. Despite its small size, the town's fire department is well positioned to provide fire prevention, fire suppression and other related services.

In fact, according to Fire Chief Bob Krewusik, the size of the community has helped the Grande Cache fire department to establish a strong presence in the community. Members go to schools, make various presentations, conduct tours and hold colouring contests. Open houses of both the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the fire department are held during Fire Prevention Week along with extrication demonstrations.

"Our small size also means that the fire department and EMS are very integrated," said Krewusik. "Most of our fire department members are cross trained in fire and rescue and the majority of members are also trained in EMS. This also impacts presentations that members make. When doing presentations about the P.A.R.T.Y. (Preventing Adolescent Risk Trauma in Youth) Program, for example, presenters talk about the program from both the fire department and EMS perspectives."

Emergency calls are dispatched through the 911 Northern Alberta Response Centre in Grande Prairie. All members have alpha-numeric pagers, with tones for different groups; one tone indicates a fire call, and another indicates a rescue call.

The success of the Grande Cache Fire Department is due to the dedication of its members and the fact that all members are extremely flexible, notes Krewusik.


"The fire chief is the only part-time paid member, but all 33 of our members meet every Tuesday night for a structured training program. There is also an extremely high turnout of members for calls."

The cross training adds to the department's flexibility and enables members to take on a number of different roles on the scene. Some of the members are also trained in specific areas, such as vehicle extrications.

According to Krewusik, "our cross training shows that integrated services such as ours work. Members can rely on one another 100 per cent."

The fire department has been very successful in implementing injury prevention programs in the community. They've also been busy working with community organizations and leaders, plus getting fire prevention education messages on the radio and in the newspaper every week. (See sidebar for more information about fire prevention activities in Grande Cache.)

Wildfires and structural fires account for the majority of calls. The fire department serves as the first attack base at the town's municipal airport and also serves as the first response for fires beyond the town limits, but it usually passes these duties on to the provincial government because the department can't leave the town without coverage.

Mutual aid agreements exist with the Hinton Fire Department; with Correctional Services Canada, Grande Cache Institution; and with the Alberta Forest Service. 



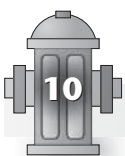
Grande Cache firefighters Dave McKenna (left) and Steve Redknapp show off their gear.

## Where did the money come from and what did it buy?

- \$9,800 grant from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
- \$2,500 donation from Weyerhaeuser
- \$1,200 worth of curriculum from the Municipal 2000 Sponsorship Program from Alberta Municipal Affairs
- The Grande Prairie Burn Society also provided a couple of copies of the *Learn Not to Burn* binders.

### The money was used for:

- Levels 1-4 *Risk Watch* Binders and Level 1 *Learn Not to Burn* binders for each school in Grande Cache
- Resource kits
- Sparky mascot costume
- Advertising costs (radio and newspaper)
- Photocopying (to assist teachers)



# Enhancing fire prevention education in the Town of Grande Cache

For the past year and a half, the Town of Grande Cache has been making major strides in fire safety and injury prevention. Through a grant from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR) and a donation from Weyerhaeuser, Dave McKenna, fire prevention officer for the Grande Cache Fire Department, has been focusing on fire and injury prevention education.

Through McKenna's efforts, the *Risk Watch* and *Learn Not to Burn* programs are available from pre-school to Grade 8 in every school in town. McKenna has also developed resource kits, which include a fire extinguisher, life jacket, bicycle helmet, bicycle bell and many other items that help sell the programs.

McKenna has even gone one step further by developing and distributing brochure kits. These kits include a variety of existing brochures that are organized in file folders with labels relating to each subject in the *Risk Watch* binders. For example, brochures from the RCMP are included in the fire arms folder and brochures from the Fire Commissioner's Office are included in the fire prevention folder. "There's a wealth of material already available," said McKenna. "I gathered all this material together and organized it in a way that makes it easy for teachers to refer to and use as additional resource material."

In addition to purchasing and distributing these materials, McKenna has been spending a lot of time in the classroom. "Teachers really appreciate the fact that they can call us and say, 'hey, we need a 20-minute presentation.' They know that we will be there."

Similarly, the fire department is very appreciative of what teachers are doing for them. "Teachers are a very valuable resource in educating students about fire prevention. I appreciate their willingness to use the materials and to include us in the lessons," said McKenna.

It is obvious that McKenna is enthusiastic about expanding fire prevention education in his community. He seeks every opportunity to continue the learning process, by making good use of community leaders, the local newspaper and radio. But what he's most proud of is the fact that he's been able to make such an impact within the funding allocation. "Most importantly, implementing this program hasn't taken anything out of the classroom," noted McKenna. "Instead, it has given teachers resources they can use to assist them in teaching fire prevention awareness."

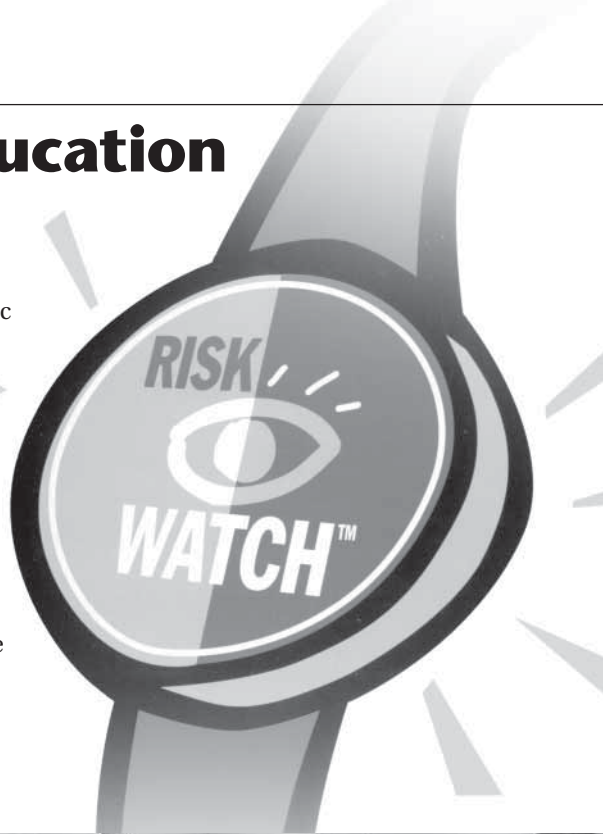


Lieutenant Dave McKenna speaking to Grade 5 - 8 students at Summitview School about the Risk Watch Program.

McKenna has also expanded his presentations beyond the classroom to a wide range of community organizations, such as the RCMP, Lands and Forests, Fish and Wildlife, COPE (Community Outreach Program Enhancement), Victim Services and others. He has also made presentations to groups of teachers and nurses. "My goal is to ensure that everyone is aware of fire prevention education and the resources available," said McKenna.

McKenna worked as an electronics and communications technician with the penitentiary for several years before leaving that position to accept a full-time Emergency Medical Services position.

He is also a member of the fire department and serves as its fire prevention officer as well as serving as a member of the Fire Commissioner's Office Childhood Injury Prevention Education subcommittee. McKenna's enthusiasm for his job means that Grande Cache is in good hands. "We have an enormous amount on the go for our small community. For example, with the new legislation on bicycle helmets, I'm now trying to get a grant to help us implement bicycle safety awareness too." 🔥



# SCOTI update

The Safety Codes Officer Training Initiative (SCOTI) program is entering its sixth year of operation. Since its beginning in 1997, approximately 1,750 individuals have participated in the initiative. While there have been many changes over the years, the main idea and goal has remained the same—to offer relevant and affordable training, in the most available manner possible.

The SCOTI program is sponsored by the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office through a partnership with the Safety Codes Council and the Alberta Fire Training School. The program is available to members of municipal volunteer fire departments in Alberta who wish to become certified or wish to upgrade their certification as safety codes officers in the fire discipline.

In a continuing effort to increase the training opportunities to municipalities across Alberta, the program is delivered in rural locations to minimize travel time and costs to participants. For the 2002/2003 training year, the SCOTI program will deliver eight courses that form part of the common

requirements for both Level I Inspector and Level I Investigator certification. The program will also provide an additional eight offerings of the entire five-day Basic Fire Safety Codes Officer training courses. This year's course schedule includes 16 locations across the province (see box at right).

The recent change in the Safety Codes Council training programs has resulted in changes to the SCOTI program too. Under the new certification requirements, the number of courses has been reduced to a maximum of eight courses each for Inspector and Investigator for certification to Level 1. The SCOTI program continues to offer the new courses that comprise the certification requirements for Basic, in addition to Level 1 Inspector and Investigator. In subsequent years, depending on demand, courses that comprise the Level 2 certification levels may also be offered. 🔥

| SCOTI 2002/2003 schedule |               |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Location                 | Course        | Date                |
| Oyen                     | Basic SCO     | April 22 - 26, 2002 |
| Drumheller               | Law for SCO   | May 6 - 9, 2002     |
| Vulcan                   | Basic SCO     | June 10 - 14, 2002  |
| High Level               | Basic SCO     | Aug 26 - 30, 2002   |
| Jasper                   | Basic SCO     | Sept 16 - 20, 2002  |
| Barrhead                 | Communication | Oct 7 - 10, 2002    |
| High River               | Communication | Oct 21 - 24, 2002   |
| Fairview                 | Basic SCO     | Nov 4 - 8, 2002     |
| Camrose                  | Law for SCO   | Nov 18 - 21, 2002   |
| Vegreville               | Communication | Dec 2 - 5, 2002     |
| Michener Center          | Law for SCO   | Dec 16 - 19, 2002   |
| Bonnyville               | Basic SCO     | Jan 6 - 10, 2003    |
| Blairmore                | Communication | Jan 20 - 23, 2003   |
| Rocky Mountain House     | Basic SCO     | Feb 3 - 7, 2003     |
| Falher                   | Law for SCO   | Feb 24 - 27, 2003   |
| Foremost                 | Basic SCO     | Mar 10 - 14, 2003   |

For more information about courses or to obtain registration forms, contact the Alberta Fire Training School at 1-888-863-2387 or check out its web site at [www.afts.ab.ca](http://www.afts.ab.ca)

## Expert advice from our two Rays

### You were asking...

- Q.** I own a small business in Northern Alberta and I have been approached by individuals a number of times stating they are authorized by the fire department to **check my fire extinguishers**. How do I ensure that these individuals are qualified to undertake this type of work?
- A.** Fire extinguishers need to be inspected on a regular basis to ensure they are in operating condition and some individuals have been known to take advantage of the lack of knowledge on this matter. Some things extinguisher owners need to know are as follows:
- Fire departments do not generally "authorize" individuals to go around checking and charging for extinguisher inspections. This is one ruse used by individuals to obtain work of this type.
  - Three terms are used by the fire protection industry with regard to fire extinguishers:

- Inspection** – fire extinguishers are to be inspected monthly. This inspection can be carried out by the extinguisher owner and is primarily to ensure that the extinguisher is located in the correct place, has not been tampered with, and is in a state of charge ready for use.
- Maintenance** – this is a thorough check of the extinguisher done on an annual basis by a company certified to carry out this type of work. Maintenance is a thorough check of the extinguisher and is intended to give maximum assurance that an extinguisher will operate effectively and safely. This maintenance will also reveal the need for hydrostatic testing.
- Recharging** – this involves the replacement of the extinguishing agent and can also include the replacement of the expelling agent.

Individuals involved in the extinguisher business are required to be qualified under the Alberta Fire Code and their facilities are inspected by companies approved by Alberta Municipal Affairs. Mobile shops are also required to undergo inspection. If uncertain, ask to see details of shop certification and qualifications.



Ray Cox, Edmonton and Ray Ligenza, Calgary

- Q.** A private fire protection company will be **doing a fire inspection of my company premises**. How can I verify that it has the necessary approval to conduct fire inspections? Where does it get its qualifications?
- A.** Companies involved in inspections under the umbrella of the Safety Codes Act are required to be an accredited agency. Agencies are accredited by the Safety Codes Council and are required to have certified staff. The Safety Codes Council can be contacted at (780) 413-0099 for further information or to verify agency credentials. 🔥

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



# Keeping in tune with the community's needs

Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains 15 minutes south of Calgary is the dynamic and progressive community of Okotoks. The town has 11,400 residents in what is considered by many to be a bedroom community of Calgary. While the picturesque location in the beautiful Sheep River valley provides a sense of tranquillity, the town's fire department is ensuring that it is well prepared to handle emergency situations.

The department has evolved over the years, beginning with the first full-time position of a deputy chief in 1996. It now has two fire stations, six full-time staff and 22 volunteer staff. All full-time staff are EMT firefighters. "We provide basic life support first response for medical incidents when the ambulance is committed on another call, but we don't transport anyone," said Rob Mackenzie, deputy fire chief.


Both fire chief Paul Kaiser and MacKenzie have taken the emergency management courses at the Emergency Disaster Preparedness College at Arnprior, and once a year they reinforce that training by setting up an emergency operations centre. As well, they are both taking ongoing courses related to terrorism. According to Mackenzie, "While we've already received training and participated in exercises about dealing with disasters, the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> in New York City has meant that we've picked up the pace on this concern. Small towns in Alberta certainly aren't exempt from this type of incident."

While the fire department has always received good support from the town, after September 11<sup>th</sup> it started receiving even better support. "It's also apparent in the residents of Okotoks," said Mackenzie. "Quite often people stop us on the street and thank us for the work we do; some have even apologized for taking us for granted in the past. These comments are greatly appreciated by all, and enforce why we do what we do."

The Okotoks Fire Department covers 480 square kilometres and has mutual aid agreements with the Calgary Fire Department as well as with the smaller communities of Black Diamond and High River, and has assisted these two communities on many occasions. With a railroad crossing through the centre of the community, an urgent need for an emergency response facility was apparent. A satellite fire station was built and put into service in December 2001. This station houses an 850 g.p.m. pumper and a 100-foot aerial ladder truck. In the event of an emergency where the response would be delayed by a train, one of the first calls made is to the CPR 1-800 line says Mackenzie.

The north fire station serves as the main station with full-time staff and administration offices. It houses a new E-One 1,500 g.p.m. pumper, 1,050 g.p.m. pumper, bush buggy, 2,000-gallon tanker, rescue unit and chief's car. A rapid response 4x4 unit is on order that will tow a 12-foot water rescue trailer to better serve the lake, storm ponds and river in the community.

While most of the residents commute to the south end of Calgary, Okotoks also has a light industrial commercial base and a strong agricultural focus. The 458 calls that the fire department responded to last year included motor vehicle collisions, wildland/rural fires, dollar-loss fires, miscellaneous/alarms, and medical first response.

The Okotoks Fire Department is also dedicated to working with students and teachers. In addition to presentations made at the schools following the criteria in the *Risk Watch* binders, firefighters also conduct safety tours all year. The fire department has two programs, each about 70 minutes long. One is geared to students from pre-school to Grade 4 and approximately 400 students per year are involved. The other program, geared to students in Grades 5 to 7, reaches about 200 students each year. Tours are also conducted for various community groups such as the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. 

## 2001 McDonald's Fire Prevention Week contest winner

Holly Huesken, a Grade 2 student at Dr. Morris Gibson Elementary School in Okotoks was the lucky winner of the grand prize in the 2001 Fire Prevention Week contest sponsored by McDonald's Restaurants of Canada and implemented by the Okotoks fire department and the local McDonald's franchise. At an awards ceremony on December 14, 2001, Holly was awarded the grand prize—a trip for four to Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida—by Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham. In addition to Holly's prize, her teacher Peggy Gerrard was also presented with a candy bouquet from the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). The FCO also awarded \$200 to Ms. Gerrard and \$200 to principal Karen Wesley for classroom needs.

Fire Commissioner Graham also took the opportunity to acknowledge the commitment and efforts of the Okotoks Fire Department, principal Karen Wesley and everyone from Dr. Morris Gibson Elementary School and the Okotoks Western Wheel. Garth Helland, owner of the Okotoks McDonald's, was also thanked for his continued partnership and commitment to the fire safety program in the community.

The Fire Prevention Week program and contest were sponsored by McDonald's Restaurants of Canada in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba. In Alberta, approximately 163,000 worksheets were distributed to children through elementary schools. The worksheet was designed with the guidance of the Fire Commissioners' Offices in the three participating provinces.



Holly Huesken, winner of trip to Disneyworld

## And the winners are...

Every year, the Fire Commissioner's Office and the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association (AWNA) hold a competition in recognition of the valuable support that Alberta weekly newspapers provide in educating Albertans about fire safety. Newspapers from across Alberta send their Fire Prevention Week coverage to the FCO in the hopes of winning in one of three circulation categories:

- Less than 2500
- 2501 to 5000
- 5001+

Entries were judged on a variety of criteria, including:

- overall effort and interest of the publisher in bringing the fire safety message to its readership
- locally written articles
- editorials and photographs
- involvement with the local community and fire department
- innovative coverage and attractiveness
- use of articles supplied by the FCO



The panel of judges included Alison Gates-Kriston, Communications Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs; Sondra MacKenzie, Advertising Assistant, Public Affairs Bureau, and Marion Walsh, Fire Prevention Branch, Strathcona County Emergency Services.

First place winners in each category were presented with plaques and honourable mentions with certificates at the AWNA Symposium that took place in January 26, 2002 at the Coast Terrace Inn in Edmonton.

The grand prize winner, Valleyview Valley Views, also received a weekend stay for two (with complimentary breakfast) from the Coast Terrace Inn—Edmonton South.

### The winners for Fire Prevention Week 2001 are:

#### Under 2500

1st place  
Honourable mention

Fort MacLeod Gazette  
Consort Enterprise  
Provost News  
Sundre Round Up  
Valleyview Valley Views

#### 2501 to 5000

1st place  
Honourable mention

Taber Times  
Edson Leader  
Airdrie Echo  
Banff Crag & Canyon

#### 5001+

1st place  
Honourable mention

Leduc Representative  
Brooks & County Chronicle  
Wetaskiwin Times Advertiser




### Fire Prevention Week 2002

## McDonald's Fire Prevention Week program goes province-wide

This year, McDonald's Restaurants of Canada will help promote Fire Prevention Week (October 6-12, 2002) throughout Alberta, with its activity booklet. In previous years, McDonald's program was restricted to the municipalities served by its restaurants.

As a result of this change, the Fire Commissioner's Office sent **surveys to all fire departments** in the province in April **asking whether they will participate** in the McDonald's program and how many activity booklets they'll need for children in Grades 4 to 6. Completed surveys must be faxed to the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-5898 by **May 15**. For more information on the McDonald's program, please call Sarah Barter at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 415-0547.

*Team Up for Fire Safety* is the theme for Fire Prevention Week 2002. The Fire Commissioner's Office will be producing a campaign kit and involving the media in promoting the week. It will also coordinate the Fire Prevention Week partnership activities with McDonald's. More details on the Fire Prevention Week campaign will be provided in the August edition of *Fire News*. 



# Digest

## Lethbridge firefighter recognized

Lethbridge firefighter Ed Krajewski received recognition at the Lethbridge City Council meeting April 8, 2002. He was honoured for his role in saving the life of a Regina soccer player who suffered a heart attack during a Lethbridge tournament in February. Krajewski was refereeing a game when 17-year-old Taryn Blyth went into cardiac arrest and collapsed. Krajewski and a Brooks woman performed CPR on Blyth until paramedics responded.

## Jasper firefighters donate \$6,000 in warden's memory

The Jasper Volunteer Fire Brigade society donated \$6,000 for the purchase of equipment to help provide better care for hypothermia victims. "We made this donation in the memory of Warden Mike Wynn. We worked hand in hand with him, and we have a close relationship with the warden services," said Jasper fire chief Greg Van Tighem.

## Camrose enhances its technology

The County of Camrose and the urban centres within its boundaries have unveiled a new GPS-based emergency response system. The new system will utilize global positioning technology to track 911 calls, map the route to the scene, and track the speed and location of the response vehicles. The system will eventually include information on road conditions as well.

## Blackfalds acquires new rescue gear

The Blackfalds Fire Department recently acquired a new piece of rescue equipment—the Jaws of Life. Thanks to the Blackfalds Firefighters Association who put together several fundraising initiatives and carefully saved up their money for three years, the fire department was able to make the purchase on their own. According to Captain Terry Picketts, "the public supported events for fundraisers, which meant that no money was taken out of the town's budget for this purchase." With half of the department already trained in the use of the equipment, and the other half scheduled for training and certification by year's end, the new acquisition will be a very useful piece of equipment.

## Invaluable gift for Sylvan Lake Fire Department

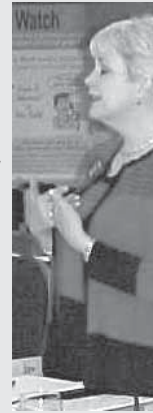
New technology has been added to the Sylvan Lake Fire Department, thanks to the local Lions Club and STARS. The fire department now owns a Scott Eagle Imager I, which is a thermal imaging camera used to detect heat. According to Deputy Fire Chief Marty Skog, the camera allows us to see through the smoke and see into a structure on fire, regardless of the density of the darkness. By detecting heat, it will allow us to see if there is a body anywhere." In addition to possibly saving lives, the camera will also provide a greater measure of safety. The majority of the funding for the \$20,000 camera came from the Lions Club and STARS, with the fire department picking up about 25 per cent of the cost.

## Morinville mourns loss of fire chief

Don Found, Morinville's fire chief of 28 years, owner of Westland Building Supplies, husband and father, died suddenly March 21. He was 59. Found served on the volunteer fire department since 1968 and became chief in 1974. Morinville deputy chief Ron Cust said Found was a working, fighting fire chief with a vision that realized construction of the current fire station and provided inspiration for department members to attain high levels of training. Cust says Found was so dedicated he would schedule his vacations to leave on Thursday and return on Tuesday to avoid missing Wednesday evening fire practice. Found's passing is "a tremendous loss to the community," said Morinville mayor Lloyd Bertschi.

## Meri K. Appy visits Alberta

March 27, 2002 may be a historic date for the *Risk Watch* movement in Alberta. That's when Meri K. Appy, the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Vice President of Education, came to Edmonton at the invitation of the FCO to talk about increasing *Risk Watch's* profile in the province and bumping up the program's Canadian content. Representatives from fire departments actively promoting *Risk Watch* throughout the province gave short presentations on their activities and asked questions of Appy. "The NFPA is open to further enhancements to *Risk Watch* to make it even more useful to teachers in Canada," said Appy. Minutes of the meeting are available from the FCO and a *Risk Watch* Implementation Network is being planned.



## New member joins Fire News editorial board

Fire Commissioner Pat Graham is pleased to announce that Bob Zifkin has joined the editorial board of *Fire News*. Zifkin has worked in the insurance industry since 1974 as a claims adjuster, claims examiner and claims supervisor. He also worked as an insurance agent for five years and is currently employed as a Loss Prevention Officer and Risk Manager with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties insurance division, Jubilee Insurance Agencies Limited.

Bob is also a past president of the Fire Investigation Association of Alberta and a member of the International Association of Arson Investigators. He has been accepted as an expert witness on fire origin and cause by the Alberta Provincial Court and has appeared as a witness in an arson trial in the Northwest Territories. As an insurance adjuster, Bob has also investigated hundreds of fire claims in Alberta.

## AFCA goes electronic

In an effort to increase efficiency and save dollars, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) will now be providing its publications in electronic form. Documents that were previously mailed out to AFCA members and customers will now be provided in two ways:

- Via the AFCA web site at [www.afca.ab.ca](http://www.afca.ab.ca), and
- Via a CD-Rom disk

The CD-Rom will be mailed out to individuals and companies currently on the association's mailing list. According to Bill MacKay, AFCA Executive Director, "Changing the way we publish documents is expected to be highly effective in the ongoing operations of the AFCA. It also helps conserve the environment."

## Fire News survey results

The results of the Fire News survey indicate that more than 95 per cent of those who responded are satisfied with the look and content of the newsletter. Thanks to all who responded and feel free to give us your suggestions or story ideas anytime.

## Pay attention to these dates

National Forestry Week: **May 4-11, 2002**  
Fire Hotline 427-FIRE (3473)  
<http://envweb.env.gov.ab.ca/env/forests/fpd/>

National Emergency Preparedness Week:  
**May 6-12, 2002** [www.emergencypreparednessweek.ca](http://www.emergencypreparednessweek.ca)

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

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Alberta Municipal Affairs or the Government of Alberta. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged. The contents of *Alberta Fire News* may be reproduced with the appropriate credit to the source. The editorial office of *Alberta Fire News* is located at:

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## *Changing the way of doing business...*

*continued from page 1*

The changes also include a switch to the FCO being a uniformed organization, including a new rank marking. "These changes better reflect our organization. We're tied to the fire service but don't have the same ranking as fire chief, so we needed a visual identity that differentiated us from fire departments," added Graham. "The expanding scope of our responsibilities includes more training for fire departments and more visibility. The uniform and the new rank marking indicate the professionalism and the service element that is provided by our staff."

The FCO is getting very involved with training in the next five to seven years, especially with volunteer fire departments. "With an estimated 40 per cent retirement of current fire personnel over the next several years, there's a real need for training—from firefighting to officer development training to administration and organizational training. Most of our staff, particularly the fire safety officers, will be involved with in-house training at the local fire department level," said Graham.

The evolving changes at the FCO reflect a more focused direction for the organization that also creates efficiencies and, according to Graham, "a better bang for the buck."

While the FCO will continue to keep the Fire Statistics Information System and many fire prevention education activities a main priority, the addition of six new staff and the growing/ changing needs of fire departments across Alberta mean that the FCO also needs to grow and change to meet the challenges ahead. 



## *Increasing visibility in the community*

The most readily apparent change at the Fire Commissioner's Office is the switch to staff wearing uniforms. A new rank (epaulet), shoulder flashes and logo have been designed. The uniforms will include a navy blue tunic and pants, and both light grey and white dress shirts. In keeping with the dress protocol that is currently being established, the light grey dress shirts will be for regular work days and the white dress shirt will be worn with the tunic for more formal occasions.

The rank includes a wide gold bar and a series of gold Maltese Crosses (the number is determined by the individual's position). The Maltese Cross was chosen because it is an internationally recognized symbol of the fire service.

Fire safety officer vehicles will also be marked with the new logo. It follows the International Colour bar code and was updated from an original Fire Commissioner's Office logo.

## *Deputy fire commissioner resigns*

Wayne Girven resigned as deputy fire commissioner on May 1, 2002. Wayne served as assistant fire commissioner from January 1, 1999 until December 2001. He assumed the working title of deputy fire commissioner in January 2002. Wayne has accepted the job of manager of operations at the Alberta Fire Training School. We wish him the very best in his new position.

