

Training responders to deal with farm emergencies

Every year in Alberta an average of 18 people are killed in farm-related incidents. And for every death, there are hundreds of injuries – some that are reported, and many that are not.

Olds volunteer firefighter Lynn Roberts knows about farm emergencies firsthand. A firefighter for 15 years and an EMT for seven years, he has responded to many serious farm incidents, including those where fatalities occurred. He was also raised on a farm and has family members who continue to work in the farming industry and have had injuries and potentially serious near misses. “For me, farm safety is very personal and I was concerned that our emergency personnel needed special training for what to do and what not to do when responding to



Rene (left) and Lynn (right) preparing to use a dummy for their training course

farm emergencies,” he said. “One of the things I noticed is that more and more of our emergency personnel are not familiar with farms, either the equipment or the way of life, and this lack of familiarity can lead to additional hazards for both the rescuer and the victim.”

Lynn’s concerns prompted him and his colleague Rene Schoonderbeek, a volunteer firefighter and EMT for nearly 20 years, to discuss training options with their employer, Mountain View Regional Emergency Services, which provides emergency services to Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs, Sundre and the Village of Cremona. “Dealing with farm emergencies is different from city emergencies in a number of



Lynn and Rene illustrating how farm tragedies can occur

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ways,” explained Lynn. “In our training as firefighters we learn extraction techniques, but farm equipment presents unique and potentially dangerous problems in this area. Another challenge is that many farmers are independent, and if they call for help and the emergency responders who arrive don’t seem to have the understanding and confidence to deal with the situation, the farmer very likely won’t call for help the next time. This could lead to the farmer inflicting more harm by trying to handle a situation that requires professionals and specialized equipment.”

Mountain View Regional Emergency Services agreed that there was a need for a better understanding and response strategy for dealing with farm emergencies, and encouraged Lynn and Rene to find a course that would meet their needs. The FarmMedic Instructors Course offered through Cornell University caught their attention. “We felt that by obtaining this training we would be able to help teach the emergency responders in our area the proper techniques for responding to farm emergencies. The course shows fire crews and emergency personnel safe ways to approach farm emergencies and extractions through classroom and hands-on training with real equipment,” said Lynn. The training covers things like entanglement in balers, combines, harvesters and power take-offs, and rescue from grain bins, silos and manure pits.




Rene and Lynn explaining the potential tragedy

Lynn and Rene were also trained as instructors for a course called *First on the Scene*. Geared towards farm families, the course explains how to avoid dangerous incidents on farms and how the actions of the first people on the scene can be critical. “The most important thing for a person who is the first on the scene of a farm emergency to do is ensure his or her safety by securing the scene,” said Lynn. “This is especially difficult, and therefore very important to stress, because in most cases the first person to respond to a farm emergency is a family member.”

Mountain View Regional Emergency Services will begin offering the FarmMedic training to fire departments in their county this summer. The Ponoka Fire Department and the Brooks Fire

Department have also expressed interest, and Mountain View Regional Emergency Services is hopeful more communities will look into the training.

“Here in Mountain View County we are trying to take a two-fold approach to improving farm safety by providing training to our emergency response personnel and farm families in our communities,” said Lynn, who also plans to continue teaching the *First on the Scene* training, something he began doing last summer. “It is our hope that our training helps save lives not only in our county but also in other communities as well.” 

For more information about the training, contact Mountain View Regional Emergency Services at (403) 335-4070 or visit www.mountainviewems.com.

Emergency vehicles and insurance


Emergency vehicles on airport tarmacs

As a result of recent accidents involving vehicle impact with aircraft while loading/unloading patients, the St. Paul Insurance Companies issued a Canadian directive that they will no longer insure automobile liability arising out of the use or operation of a motor vehicle on airport tarmacs.

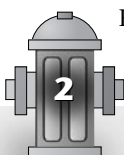
For those municipalities that carry an airport liability policy, this does

not create any problem as the airport liability insurance will extend to vehicles on the tarmac if the aviation insurers are advised that this is happening. Ambulance companies will be required to purchase this additional coverage if they enter the airside of any airport. Jubilee clients have been asked to report the number of times emergency vehicles have entered onto airport tarmacs over the

last several years so that we can arrange the necessary protection and provide the underwriters with reasonable data.

Please keep in mind that this only applies to vehicles on the tarmac, not those using the airport road surface road system. 

Prepared by: R. (Bob) Zifkin, CIP CRM
Loss Prevention Officer and Risk Manager, AAMD&C



Give Us Room to Work program

Alberta's growing population, both in terms of people and vehicles, was the thrust behind a new program developed to help emergency responders. With more than two million registered vehicles on Alberta's roads as of April 2003, and an anticipated increase of about 80,000 per year, more emergency personnel can be expected to respond to significantly more emergencies. Add to that the reality of collisions and near misses involving other commuters and emergency and roadside assistance vehicles and it is apparent that something needs to be done.

The "Give Us Room to Work" program was developed by the Alberta Motor Association and other stakeholders (see circle) to educate Alberta motorists about responding safely to emergency and roadside assistance vehicles on the roads. Through a public awareness campaign, the program is striving to ensure the safety of every individual to, at, and from a roadside emergency scene.

The program's broad-based steering committee has developed a comprehensive strategic plan that includes both short term and longer term goals. The program has five major goals:

1. Determine baseline information, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of Alberta emergency services personnel and that of the general motoring public

having to interact as a result of an emergency event.

2. Maintain consistency of messaging to the Alberta motoring public and emergency service personnel (rural and urban) in an effort to reduce risk and improve safety.
3. Increase Alberta motorists' awareness and understanding of acceptable behaviours when encountering emergency service personnel working on Alberta roadways.
4. Increase Alberta emergency service personnel awareness and understanding of the risks associated with rendering care and or services on Alberta roadways.
5. Enhance the protection of emergency service personnel alongside Alberta roadways through legislation, enforcement and engineering efforts.



Motorists should use caution when driving past an accident scene

Members of the "Give Us Room to Work" program include:

- Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
- Alberta Motor Association
- Calgary EMS
- Calgary Fire Department
- Calgary Police Service
- Edmonton EMS
- Edmonton Fire Rescue
- Edmonton Police Service
- Fort McMurray Fire Department
- Grande Cache Fire Department
- Parkland Ambulance Authority
- St. Albert Fire Department

"Our primary focus of the 'Give Us Room to Work' program is to make sure that all motorists in Alberta realize that by responding appropriately and yielding to emergency vehicles and personnel they help us reach our destination safely and quickly," said Dave Martin, Deputy Fire Chief, Fire Prevention and Public Education, St. Albert Fire Department, and co-chair of the steering committee.

The program is divided into three phases. Phase One was a public launch in Edmonton and Calgary on June 24, 2003 to increase awareness with Alberta motorists of how to react when an emergency service vehicle with lights and

siren is approaching. Phase Two, launched June 8, 2004, is geared to educating motorists on how to behave when passing an emergency scene. Phase Three deals with adding a regulation within the *Alberta Traffic Safety Act* to reduce the speed limit near collision scenes to 50 per cent of the posted speed limit.

The end result is a win-win situation for everyone: motorists become more aware of their actions around emergency vehicles, emergency responders can more safely respond to emergency situations, and those involved in emergencies receive more efficient service from those trained to help. 🔥

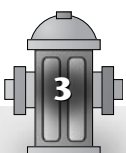
Know what to do!

Typical driver errors that slow the response time of emergency vehicles and personnel include:

- Failing to pull over to the nearest curb or median.
- Failing to stop completely, unaware that an emergency vehicle may need to turn in front of them.
- Failing to let all emergency vehicles pass before proceeding.
- Failing to see lights or sirens because of driver distractions such as loud stereos or VCR/DVD players.
- "Freezing" – the belief that the safest action is inaction.

What drivers need to know and do when they see an emergency vehicle approaching:

- On two-way streets divided by a yellow line, pull to the right and stop.
- On one-way streets or streets divided by a median, move to the nearest curb.
- If you cannot move at a red light, hold your position until the light changes, then slowly and cautiously pull into the intersection in the direction of traffic.
- Slow down when passing collision scenes or the amber flashing lights of a roadside assistance vehicle.



Mutual aid in Alberta

Fire services in Alberta have been required to utilize mutual aid many times in the recent past. As the cost and complexity of firefighting rises, we can expect mutual aid contracting to become even more prevalent.

Developed originally by the disaster services industry, mutual aid agreements are an effective and cost efficient way for municipalities to deal with issues of public safety. These agreements allow municipalities to rely on the resources of neighbours when their own resources are in use, overwhelmed, or otherwise unable to mitigate an incident alone.

However, there are a number of considerations that a fire chief must consider when recommending mutual aid agreements to their council.

Mutual aid assistance

You must first determine whether you are truly considering mutual aid, which is a reciprocal arrangement where your neighbour may help you one day and you will help them the next. This is different than an agreement where you provide a service to someone but they don't provide a service back. The latter is a fee for service arrangement. It is also different from some forms of automatic aid agreements where one jurisdiction responds routinely (usually first) into the jurisdiction of their neighbour simply because they are closer. All arrangements can have a monetary charge or other form of payment associated with them, and all have their own special considerations.

In true reciprocal mutual aid, the departments will be required to deal with some perplexing and sometimes controversial issues. These are not arrangements that should be entered into merely because "they are the thing to do" or "because everyone else is doing it." There must be valid business reasons why you feel it best to have mutual aid arrangements in place. These reasons will be revealed in your fire master plan or in the risk assessment you

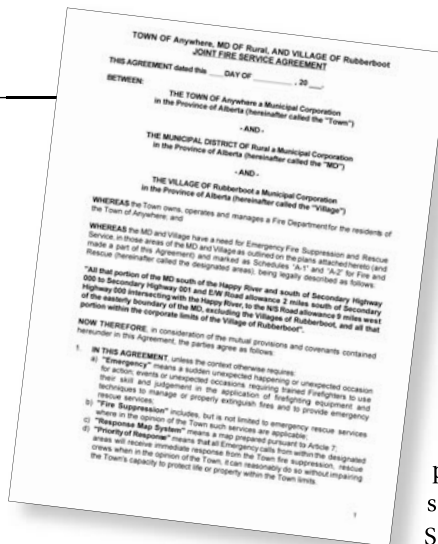
have done for your community. In some cases, it will be your neighbours who are asking you.

There are some important items that need to be considered in mutual assistance agreements in Alberta. For example, in many of the agreements currently used, a fire chief can refuse to respond at his/her sole discretion. Obviously, this does nothing to enhance a requesting party's security or ability to deal with an emergency. It also calls into question the need to enter into a mutual aid agreement at all. If you cannot count on the help you thought you had access to via the agreement, perhaps you should seek assistance elsewhere.

It is fine to say that you cannot respond if you have a concurrent emergency in your area or if it is unsafe to respond because of hazardous weather conditions, or you don't have enough staff to ensure a safe response. It is also fine to require a clause that says you can return to your area when there is a life threatening emergency and the one you are leaving is not. (Of course this would be an issue you deal with by entering into an agreement with the other neighbour). There is no other reason why anyone should be permitted to decline a request to respond.

Joint training/equipment compatibility

A properly constructed mutual aid agreement will also deal with the issues of joint training and equipment compatibility. The fire ground is the wrong place to discover that your firefighters operate in a totally different manner than those of your mutual aid partner, and that your hose couplings are not compatible. It is also not a good place to debate issues such as incident command – who is in charge and what system are we following?



Agreement on resources

A mutual aid agreement should also contain reference to the type of resources that the partner is willing to send to your jurisdiction. Sometimes you will need firefighters and sometimes

you will need equipment – it will not always be a pumper and its staff. This should be covered and a list of available equipment should be maintained by all parties to the agreement, and all should be notified of changes.

Firefighter safety is of the utmost importance in these arrangements and an incident commander must have some knowledge of the level of training that the firefighters he/she commands possess. It is not appropriate to allow freelancing at the fire scene. No one needs to become a babysitter when they thought they were getting help.

Communications

An agreement must also deal with technical matters such as communications. A system allowing the partners to communicate with each other is very important. Radio frequencies or spare radios must be available.

For a good example of a mutual aid agreement see the Fire Control Plans used by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development to help them deal with wildfire issues. And remember – each fire service responding to a fire should submit a fire incident report to the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) even where you are responding under a mutual aid in another jurisdiction. 🔥

Note: a sample mutual aid agreement is provided on the FCO's website at: www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco/index.cfm
Prepared by Spence Sample, B.A., LLB
Consultant to the FCO

Certified training provided for Alberta firefighters

Alberta Municipal Affairs, through the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), has allocated \$500,000 for a special Fire Services Training Initiative. The initiative was designed through a joint effort of the FCO, the Fire Services Advisory Committee and fire chiefs from across Alberta. The idea was modeled on the successful shared training partnership between the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the County of Vermilion River.

"Alberta's firefighters are on the front line protecting the lives and property of our citizens," said Guy Boutilier, Minister of Municipal Affairs. "This new initiative will ensure they have the training they need to continue keeping us safe."

The initiative encourages the facilitation of regional training centres across Alberta, which will bring together personnel from neighbouring fire departments to share in the delivery and attendance of training courses. A designated training centre will be located within one hour of the majority of the province's municipalities to ensure accessible training services to all fire departments. The regional training courses will be conducted primarily on weekends and will address a variety



Firefighters taking part in vehicle extraction training

of needs specific to each region. The training initiative also places a special focus on volunteer and Aboriginal firefighters; 80 per cent of the course enrollments will be reserved for volunteers, and Aboriginal firefighters will be invited to attend. Each regional centre will receive funding based on its offering of approved courses. The regional centres are encouraged to make application for courses that consider local needs.

While the training centres are situated to serve surrounding fire departments, firefighters will also have the option to register for a course that better meets their individual needs at one of the other training centres.

This means that on a given weekend, Alberta firefighters could be training on dangerous goods in Fort McMurray or on wildfires in Wainwright. In Spirit River, there may be a course on farm accident rescue, and in Lacombe, firefighters might be attending a course on emergency vehicle driving.

Through this shared delivery concept, more firefighters will receive certified training.

An additional benefit will be the dramatic improvement in the quality of training. The new certified training courses have been developed by fire service professionals at the **fire etc.** training school, and are being delivered by existing qualified local fire training instructors. Fire training grants were previously limited to fire departments in municipalities with populations under 20,000. The new initiative will provide training for firefighters in all municipalities regardless of size. In the event that a firefighter or department is still too far from a centre, the grant program has a provision to deliver training through alternative methods.

"Including all Alberta firefighters is key to this program," said Alberta's Fire Commissioner, Pat Graham. "And by supporting innovation and cooperation, we're ensuring local solutions will be paramount." 🔥

A comprehensive list of regional training centres and the courses offered is available from the FCO. Course details and registration information is available from the regional centres. For other questions regarding this initiative call the FCO at (780) 427-8392 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton).



Firefighters taking part in tower training

Determining fire apparatus needs

There are a number of considerations faced by a municipal fire service when it comes to the purchase of fire apparatus, particularly fire pumpers. Perhaps the biggest challenge is matching the equipment to the risk faced, where the question often raised concerns the type of equipment to purchase:

Do we need a mini-pump or a Class A pump or can we effectively use something totally different?

There are no hard and fast rules governing the acquisition of fire apparatus. Every community should be aware of the potential risks in their community and should equip their department to meet those risks. In some cases, neither a mini-pump nor a Class A may be the appropriate vehicle for the task. Knowing the risk you face will help focus your choices. Communicating with similar departments facing similar risk can also help you avoid unnecessary legal risk and exposure. The key is knowing your risk exposure.

Should you discover you require a mini-pump, Class A pump, aerial, Quint or tanker/tender, or even a mobile foam unit and a variety of specialty support vehicles, there are at least two formal standards that you should be aware of. Both the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) publish written minimum standards that describe how to build one of the fire trucks listed above. These are NFPA 1901 and ULC S515-M88 respectively.

Each of these standards, for example, describes an initial attack apparatus as “fire fighting apparatus with a permanently mounted fire pump of at least 1000 L/min (200 gpm / 265 US-gpm) capacity, water tank and hose body whose primary purpose is to initiate a fire suppression attack on structural, vehicular or vegetation fires, and to support associated fire department operations.” Clearly, the initial attack apparatus is not intended to be



The Enilda fire truck and crew

used alone for continuous operations at a structural fire scene. That task is left to a Pumper (NFPA) or a Pumper Fire Fighting Apparatus (ULC), which must have a pump capable of delivering a minimum of 3000 litres per minute.

ULC S515-M88 is currently being revised; the second edition will contain minimum requirements on all the apparatus commonly used in our industry. However, that does not mean that fire service agencies are restricted to those vehicles. Necessity is, after all, the mother of invention. Mini-pumpers and mobile foam vehicles were unheard of not that long ago. Now they are enshrined in our standards. One current example of creativity can be found in the Municipal District of Mackenzie where the fire department places firefighting wagons equipped with limited firefighting equipment in the furthest reaches of the M.D. for the use of residents. The idea is unique and it permits residents to attempt to control a fire while waiting for the department to arrive.

Do we buy new or used? Can we keep our 20-year-old Class A pumper indefinitely?

Neither the NFPA nor ULC speak to the issue of apparatus retention in their standards. The decision as to when to replace this very expensive equipment is left to the various municipalities. The

short answer is yes, you can buy used vehicles and you can keep that old pump indefinitely but you do need to consider a few things first. Most importantly, is it safe to do so?

The Insurance Advisory Organization and its predecessors have been rating fire services for nearly 100 years, commonly referred to as the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS). This rating is one factor used by insurance companies to establish a premium for some of their property subscribers, particularly the commercial, industrial and institutional properties. Some municipalities also use it as a benchmark to measure their fire services relative to other communities. FUS has published the Evaluation of Public Fire Protection: A Guide to Recommended Practice (1986). This guide was prepared following NFPA and ULC standards. In this guide, FUS notes the customary practice suggesting that fire apparatus be taken off front line service after 15 years and placed in auxiliary service as a back-up unit. They also acknowledge, however, that this is a policy decision the owners can make and that rebuilding apparatus can extend its useful life. Perhaps the most important message delivered by FUS is that pumps require careful maintenance and annual testing to ensure that they are capable of fulfilling their function. They should




Okotoks fire department's Pump 84

be refurbished when there is doubt they can be relied upon. This is an extremely important safety factor for firefighters who mount offensive fire attacks. The failure of a pumper during such an attack can be fatal!

Safety is also the focus of the discussion found in Annex D of the NFPA-1901 standard. Apparatus built prior to the 1991 improved standards outlined by both NFPA and ULC have few of the new safety features found on later apparatus.

They suggest that in the interests of firefighter safety only post-1991 apparatus or apparatus refurbished to the NFPA-1912 standard be used for first line response. As well, they suggest apparatus built to meet the 1985 or 1979 editions should be used as reserve only and that anything older than that should basically be removed from service.

Fire apparatus, like all mechanical things, will have a finite lifespan. This will vary depending on actual use and, more importantly, on the maintenance of the apparatus. Where one unit is unsuitable at five years old another can last indefinitely. As with all mechanical things, the cost of maintenance can eventually outstrip the cost of replacement. For very old apparatus, the cost of refurbishing to the safety standards of today can also exceed the cost of a new purchase. All of these factors must be considered by the individual municipality when faced with apparatus replacement decisions. 


Prepared by Spence Sample, B.A., LLB
Consultant to the Fire Commissioner's Office

Protect yourself on the job

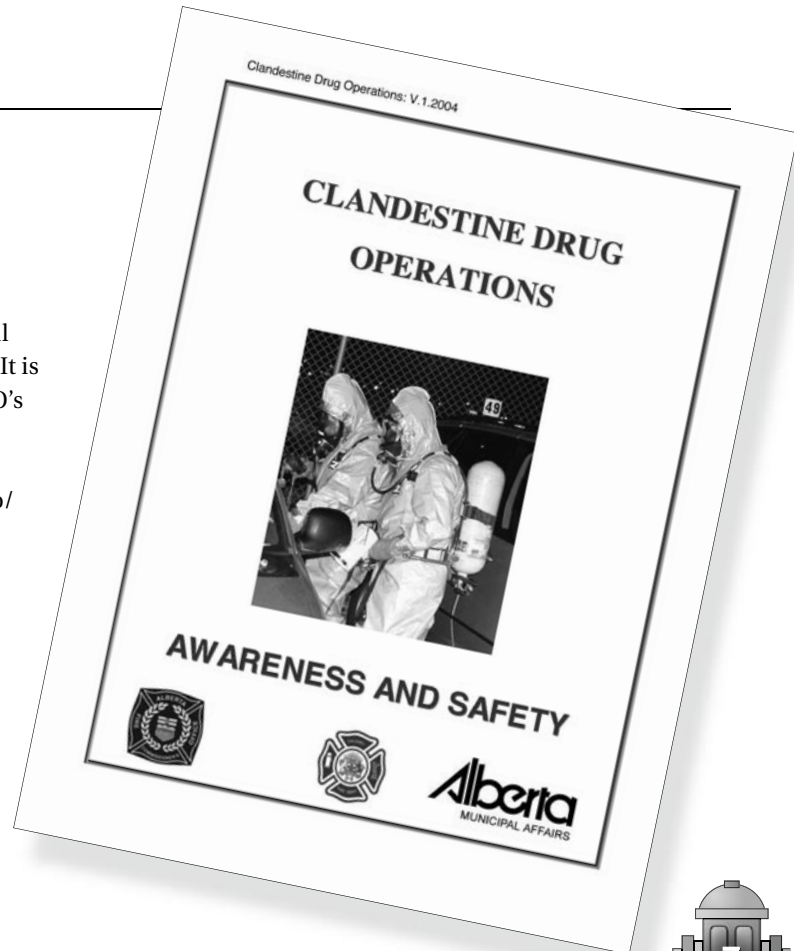
Clandestine lab information available

In response to numerous requests from the fire service, the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is pleased to announce that it has, with the great assistance of the Calgary Fire Department, produced a Clandestine Lab Awareness package for first response agencies. This awareness package covers grow operations and clandestine drug production facilities. It contains useful information to assist first responders in identifying, securing and dealing with these very hazardous facilities.

The package contains numerous photos and descriptions as well as information to assist in the

development of local response protocols. It is available on the FCO's website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco/index.cfm, on CD-ROM, or in print (limited quantities) on request from either the FCO or your local Fire Safety Officer. 

The cover of the new clandestine lab awareness package



Keeping you up to date...



Partnerships provide more spaces in fire fighter training program

Three new partnerships formalized in 2004 have enhanced **fire etc.**'s capacity to deliver the full-time Fire Fighter Training Program. Programs delivered by Firemaster in Red Deer and the Emergency Services Academy of Sherwood Park have curriculum identical to that of the 12-week program in Vermilion.

The program, commencing September 11 in Calgary and in partnership with the Calgary Fire Department, provides certification in NAPD Driving rather than Wildland Fire Fighter and runs over 13 weeks.

Plan A consulting takes wing

Effective May 1, 2004, **fire etc.** divested itself of the Plan A consulting unit. The move came about as a result of the new *Post-secondary Learning Act*, which clarifies the roles and functions

of colleges. Plan A now operates as an Alberta corporation independent from **fire etc.**

"We are very proud that **fire etc.** played a key role in the incubation of this unique emergency services consulting business," said **fire etc.** CEO Don Gnatiuk. "Under the **fire etc.** umbrella, Plan A completed some very notable and innovative projects."

Canadian Aviation Regulations Standards (CARS) training

fire etc. now delivers training to meet the requirements of CARS 308 Regulation and CARS 328 Standard for Aircraft Emergency Intervention at Airports.

Basic CARS Intervener Training – theoretical is available through self-study, at the client's worksite, or at **fire etc.** The practical component consists of Crash Truck Operations, Portable Extinguisher, and Optional Handline Operations. A 36-hour entry-

fire etc.

level program is also offered, providing the basic skills and knowledge needed for appropriate safe response to a Class "A" or Class "B" fire.

Fall is prime time for officer training

While activity on the training field begins to wind down in fall, classrooms remain active over the fall and winter. Space is still available in these NFPA 1021 courses:

Fire Fighting Strategy and Tactics – Command (theoretical)
November 8-12

Fire Fighting Strategy and Tactics – Command (practical)
September 7-9 or September 28-30

Inspection and Public Education for the Fire Officer
September 27-October 1

Instructional Methodology I
September 6-10

Instructional Methodology II
September 13-17

Instructional Methodology III
September 6-9 or October 11-14

Dangerous Goods Responder – Incident Command
September 21-23

Written Communication Skills
October 18-21

Oral Communications Skills
October 25-28

Courses are also scheduled in the fall for NFPA 1031, NFPA 1033, NFPA 1035, and NFPA 1041 standards.

The four courses leading to the Basic Fire Safety Codes Officer designation are offered September 20-24. For those seeking Inspector or Investigator qualifications, several courses are also available during the fall. 🔥

Note: **fire etc.**'s complete training schedule for 2005 will be on the website (www.fire-etc.ca) in September 2004.

fire etc. now a division of Lakeland College

On June 30, 2004, **fire etc.** officially became a division of Lakeland College. The organization has been a wholly owned subsidiary corporation of the college since 1998.

"As a subsidiary corporation, **fire etc.** has been run as a very independent part of Lakeland College, with its own Board of Directors and administrative system," said Dr. Mark Lee, President and Chief Executive Officer of Lakeland College.

Alberta Learning wanted Lakeland College to be more involved in the operations of **fire etc.**, something the college's Board of Governors felt wasn't possible under the current reporting structure. As a result the following changes took place June 30:

- Don Gnatiuk, formerly the Chief Executive Officer of **fire etc.**, became Lakeland College's Vice President, **fire etc.**
- The Board of Directors of **fire etc.** was dissolved.

The changes are not expected to have an impact on **fire etc.** clients.

"**fire etc.** will continue to be a very entrepreneurial school. We've directed Don (Gnatiuk) and **fire etc.** staff to continue to work towards being recognized not only nationally but internationally as a provider of emergency training services," said Lee. "We at Lakeland will look after many of the administrative and operations functions so **fire etc.** can focus on delivering its products and services."

fire etc. also looks forward to a closer association with Lakeland, says Gnatiuk. "This move will further enhance our ability to serve our customers in both the municipal and private sectors. We will continue to place priority on the delivery of municipal fire service training as mandated by the Fire Commissioner's Office."



Revitalizing emergency management in Canada

The federal government's department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) has begun discussions about working with provinces and territories to establish a full, co-ordinated, co-operative and integrated emergency management structure for Canada. Emergency Management Alberta, the Alberta organization responsible for emergency management services across our province, is prepared to play an important role in the revitalization of a federal perspective on emergency management.

"This is good news for all jurisdictions," said Dave Redman, Acting Director of Emergency Management Alberta. "It provides the opportunity to address many outstanding issues in support of first responders and municipal governments, especially with respect to the evolving nature of both natural and human induced hazards in our province."

A February 2004 meeting of Senior Officials responsible for Emergency Preparedness discussed the need for a

master plan for national emergency management. The next step was development and tabling of a draft master plan for discussion with federal, provincial and territorial emergency management partners, which occurred on April 6 and 7 in Ottawa.

Discussions at this meeting focused on three key areas:

- a federal concept of emergency response;
- the views and challenges raised by the provinces, territories and other federal departments; and
- a way to move forward at the national level.

This critical discussion led to preparations for the development of a national system, with federal



Minister Boutilier (right) with Senator Tommy Banks at the EMA operations centre for the announcement of the completion of Alberta's EPWS



departments, provinces and territories initiating work in three areas:

- integrated response procedures co-ordinated with PSEPC portfolio;
- a co-ordinated federal approach to upgrade existing systems and response facilities; and
- a co-ordinated national approach in establishing a government co-ordination centre and related systems and procedures.

As well, at the First Ministers meeting, identification of the need for specifically assigned priorities for the development of an improved "national response co-ordination" and an improved "federal disaster recover assistance capability" further supported the revitalization of a national emergency management system.

"We look forward to sharing our experience and expertise with our colleagues across Canada," added Redman. "While there are many factors to take into consideration, by working together, I feel confident that we can establish a highly efficient system that works effectively across the country." 🔥



Minister Boutilier demonstrates the EPWS

To celebrate National Emergency Preparedness Week, Guy Boutilier, Minister of Municipal Affairs announced the completion of the province-wide Emergency Public Warning System (EPWS), the only system of its kind in Canada. This announcement was made May 7, 2004, at Emergency Management Alberta's operations centre.

For more information on the EPWS, go to www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/ema.

Spreading the *Risk Watch* message

With the end of the school year, the *Risk Watch* Champion Management Team (CMT) concluded their work with educators for another year.

The CMT networked with educators across the province during the past school year, and in addition to providing *Risk Watch* presentations and attending safety fairs, the CMT established pilot classrooms in the Grande Yellowhead School Division #35; Bonnyville; St. Paul; Camrose; Red Deer; Hinton; Jasper; and Dunsmore areas, to name just a few. The assistance and diligence of the emergency services, injury prevention coalitions, and school divisions in these communities helped to make this possible. The CMT is grateful to these people and their belief in injury prevention.

We received invitations to attend teachers' conventions in Edmonton and Calgary and provide sessions for the *Risk Watch* program. The sessions were well received and the positive session evaluation, as well as the number of educators that attended, was uplifting. We are hopeful that we will receive an invite again for next year.

Teachers' conventions attended were:

- North Central Teachers' Convention – Edmonton
- Hutterite Teachers' Convention – Red Deer
- Calgary Teachers' Convention

Educators across the province are mandated to attend teachers' conventions as part of their professional development. We are exploring the possibility of attending most of them across the province each year with displays and presentations.

We received pre- and post-tests from the *Risk Watch* pilot classes at the end of the school year. These results will be presented to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) this November in Miami at the CMT reunion. The reunion will mark the end of the first year of the CMT commitment to establishing and promoting *Risk Watch* in Alberta. If you have any pictures of *Risk Watch* in action that the CMT could use as part of a PowerPoint presentation at the CMT reunion, please send them to Dave McKenna at gcfdem@telus.net. Please include information relevant to

the picture, i.e., name of school, teacher, firefighter, etc. We want the NFPA to know that *Risk Watch* is well established here in Alberta.

As we look forward to the 2004-05 school year, we are exploring the sustainability of *Risk Watch* in Hutterite and Aboriginal schools and communities across the province. If your department, schools or injury prevention coalition want to be involved with *Risk Watch*, you can contact the CMT by contacting the Fire Commissioner's Office or by e-mailing gcfdem@telus.net. 🔥

Prepared by: Dave McKenna, Lt./EMT, CMT Team Leader
Grande Cache Fire Department & EMS

Working together for effective smoke detector use

Calgary's smoke detector program going strong

Since 1996, the Calgary Fire Department has been working to ensure an effective smoke detector program is in place. Together with the Calgary Region Home Builders Association, ENMAX Energy Corporation and ING Insurance, the necessary supplies available to sustain this valuable home safety initiative are provided.

This year's theme is "Smoke Detectors Protect You 24/7." Calgary firefighters are going door-to-door in their

communities to test existing smoke detectors, replace batteries or install new smoke detectors as needed. In addition, firefighters advise residents on how to maintain their smoke detectors, as well as other valuable fire-safety information.

To date, firefighters have reached 116,762 homes, installed 14,150 smoke detectors and replaced or installed 9,459 batteries. 🔥



Members of the Calgary Fire Department launch their 2004 Smoke Detector Program.

More information about the program is available from the Calgary Fire Department's Community Safety Division at (403) 287-4296 or at www.calgaryfire.ca

Preparing for Fire Prevention Week 2004

Fire Prevention Week 2004 (FPW) provides an excellent opportunity for local fire departments to promote fire prevention and safety within their communities.

This year fire prevention week is from October 3-9 and the theme is:

“It’s Fire Prevention Week: Test Your Smoke Alarms!”

The focus of this year’s campaign is to remind the public about the importance of installing and maintaining smoke alarms as an early warning device for smoke and fire danger.

The Fire Commissioner’s Office (FCO) encourages fire departments to provide FPW activities in their communities and offers the following three campaign resources:

1. The McDonald’s program

A free FPW program is available to all fire departments in Alberta. The program provides children’s fire safety activity booklets (grades K-3) to be distributed to local schools, a grand prize of a trip for four to Disneyland, a Fire Chief for a Day contest, and all the supporting documents and materials necessary to implement these activities.

Fire departments can select some or all of the McDonald’s activities and use them in partnership with local schools, as a stand-alone FPW activity, or as part of a more comprehensive FPW program.

An order form for these materials was sent out to fire departments in June 2004.

2. The FCO FPW campaign kit

An FPW campaign kit will be developed for and delivered to Alberta fire departments and selected media outlets to assist and encourage local FPW activities. The campaign kit contains the following FPW support materials, which can be used, copied and distributed by fire departments, local newspapers and schools to assist community FPW activities:

- Introduction to the NFPA Fire Prevention Week Theme
- Alberta fire statistics
- Smoke alarm “Fire Facts”
- Fire prevention and safety tips
- Details and distribution tips for the McDonald’s program
- Public Service Announcements (PSA) **New**
- Advertisements **New**
- Activity ideas and implementation tips **New**
- Colourful graphics, cartoons, games and activities **New**

The FCO’s FPW campaign kit will be mailed to fire departments in mid-August and will also be posted on the FCO website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco under “Campaigns.”



Fire Prevention Week 2004 Poster

3. Media events

The Fire Commissioner’s Office will also be organizing media events during Fire Prevention Week to promote Alberta-wide fire prevention and safety messages. These events include a media kick-off event attended by the Fire Commissioner, a PSA on an Alberta-wide radio station, an advertisement in Alberta weekly newspapers, and a Fire Prevention Week coverage contest for Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association newspapers across the province. 

For more information regarding Fire Prevention Week or Fire Prevention Week activities, contact Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner’s Office at (780)-644-4692 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton), or via e-mail at: te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca.

Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department celebrates 40th anniversary

The Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department is celebrating 40 years of service this summer, and in honour of the occasion, is hosting an open house and barbecue on August 14th. Bill Purdy, one of the department's original members who continues to be an active volunteer, helped organize the event. "It will be wonderful to see everyone who helped make our department what it is today," he said.

From a group of 25 dedicated volunteers in a small one-bay hall to the team of volunteers specializing in medical aid, water rescue, highway accidents and firefighting they have today, the Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department has come a long way. In the last 40 years, more than 180 people have belonged to the department, which now operates from two halls, one for firefighting and the other for water rescue. They currently have 22 volunteers.

It all started in 1963 when concerned citizens of the Hamlet of Wabamun met with the Stony Plain council to discuss fire protection in their area. They were concerned about some serious fires they had in the previous year and wanted to discuss setting up a volunteer fire department in their community.

In June 1964, the Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department was created. The first hall was an old building on skids, donated by Calgary Power, which was replaced a few months later with a new hall that had two bays but very little other room. A new 650 front-mount pumper was also purchased in the early months of operation.

The department's first fire was at a hog barn 20 miles from Wabamun. "The weather was extremely cold and the water supply was from Mink Lake, about two miles away. There was no back-up tanker so we would extinguish the fire, go for water, return to the fire and keep going...for 12 hours," said Purdy.



Members of the original Wabamun Fire Department, including Fire Chief Art Burnham (front row, third from left)



The Wabamun Fire Hall in 1964





The fire with the greatest property loss and production costs was the burning of the Canadian National Railroad trestle across Moonlight Bay on Lake Wabamun, added Purdy. “The main line to Vancouver was out of operation for approximately six months,” he said. “It was determined that the fire was caused from a broken brake, which ignited the wooden structure.”

Seeing the need to expand their equipment, the volunteers raised money during the early ‘70s to buy a rescue van.

Until then, members of the department were using their own vehicles to travel to fires.

A few years later their old pumper was replaced with a new 850 pumper, and the newly named Village of Wabamun built a new hall with five bays. A fundraising campaign for the Jaws of Life also began. “At that time the only other department that had jaws was Spruce Grove. Our Jaws of Life were put into service in August of 1982 thanks to the money we raised,” said Purdy.

Because of the proximity to lakes and the number of calls for water rescues in the area, the department’s next priority was to buy water rescue equipment. “We work with the RCMP in search and rescue, looking after lakes in the detachment areas for Stony Plain and Evansburg,” said Purdy. “All of our members are trained

in ice rescue as well, and we have the necessary water rescue tools. We also have two in-house instructors in water rescue.”

Another major change over the last 40 years is radio communication. The department started out with a siren that was activated from one of three fire phones. The siren has now been replaced with pagers and their trucks have state-of-the-art communication. All dispatching is done through the 911 emergency control centre located in Stony Plain.

In 2002, members of the department started to receive pay for their volunteer time while at fires. Prior to that the money was pooled to help buy much-needed equipment like the Jaws of Life, a rescue boat and other necessities to make the department more efficient. 🔥



Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department at a glance

Boundaries: 14 miles east, 6 miles west, south to the North Saskatchewan River and north to the County of Lac Ste Anne.

Calls: Over the last 40 years calls have increased considerably. In 1964 there may have been 20 calls, compared to 240 for 2001. The average number of calls per year for the last 10 years is approximately 100. Grass fires account for many of the calls, but this ratio is down over the past few years due to a more-educated public and stricter enforcement by police.

The department has eight members who are trained Emergency Medical Responders and one Emergency Medical Technician. They respond to most medical calls in Wabamun and are also dispatched for serious calls in the Parkland area.

Equipment: The Wabamun Volunteer Fire Department has grown to include:

- 2003 Parkland County pumper 850 front-mount pump, four-wheel drive
- 2002 Parkland County tanker 3000 gal.
- 1997 Village of Wabamun pumper 1050
- Village of Wabamun/Parkland County rescue van (cost share 50/50)
- 2000 four-wheel drive quad
- Four-wheel drive truck with tank and pump supplied by Parkland for grass fire season
- 18-foot Boston Whaler Boat 90 HP Mercury motor
- 1998 two-person Sea-doo
- 12-foot Zodiac Boat 20 HP motor
- 2001 Ski-doo
- Various auxiliary equipment, including jaws, generators, vent fans, saws, and cameras, including an underwater camera
- Fully equipped water rescue equipment, including nine suits

Fire prevention: The department visits schools in Wabamun, Duffield and Keephills to promote fire prevention. They also conduct fire drills in schools each year.

Juvenile firesetter intervention programs in

In the previous edition of *Alberta Fire News* (May 2004, Vol. 25 Number 1), we introduced you to the two mainstream juvenile firesetter programs available in Alberta: FEMA and TAPP-C. We provided you with a brief examination of these two programs and identified the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) support in establishing these programs in Alberta. See below for recent support activities by the FCO.

AFCA conference presentation

In June 2004, the FCO held an information seminar about the FEMA and TAPP-C programs at the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Conference and Trade Show. The seminar covered juvenile firesetting, TAPP-C and FEMA intervention principles and how to

implement them, and resources and assistance available to fire departments.

TAPP-C manuals

To further assist the introduction of the TAPP-C program into Alberta, the FCO is guiding the distribution of the following TAPP-C resources:

1. TAPP-C Clinician's manual

In co-ordination with the FCO, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto has donated several TAPP-C Clinician's manuals to those Alberta counselling agencies that attended the TAPP-C workshops held in October 2003. The Clinician's manual is also available for purchase from the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association bookstore by contacting Jean at (403) 342-1840.

2. TAPP-C Fire Service Educator's manual

In co-ordination with the FCO, the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office is in the process of piloting the TAPP-C Fire Service Educator's manual with the co-operation of Alberta fire service agencies. The pilot is being conducted to ensure that the manual's components meet the educational needs of Alberta juvenile firesetters. Feedback from the Alberta fire service will be incorporated into the final version of the manual. In the interim, fire departments can use the sample Fire Service Educator's manual to conduct the educational component of this program. To receive the sample manual, please call Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 644-4692 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton). 🔥

FCO, EMA and the Public Safety Division

Working together for the safety of Albertans

The Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) and Emergency Management Alberta (EMA) are doing an excellent job helping to keep Alberta's communities safe. The FCO and EMA are only two branches of the Public Safety Division, however, and the division has two other branches that also support Alberta's safety system.

The Safety Services Branch administers the codes and standards of the *Safety Codes Act* in nine disciplines and provides technical advice to municipalities, corporations, industry and the public. During its involvement with the process of updating our provincial codes and standards, Safety Services worked closely with the FCO to develop proposed changes to the Alberta Fire Code designed to increase the level of safety for Albertans. Safety Services also gathers important input from the fire

service through its Executive Director, Ivan Moore, who sits on the Fire Services Advisory Committee.

In response to feedback from public consultations, Safety Services has also been conducting a major internal restructuring over the past several months. This process included a substantial realignment of programs, people and functions, and was carried out to improve service for stakeholders and the public. A key element of this process was the establishment of a new Communication Inquiry Centre (CIC), which went live on March 26, 2004. The CIC operates a toll-free number (1-866-421-6929) that can receive technical or Safety Codes questions from across the province.

The other branch of the Public Safety Division, Policy and Strategic Services, handles the policy and strategic planning side of the division. The

branch is also involved with co-ordinating divisional initiatives, and just recently helped the FCO roll out the new Fire Services Training Initiative. This new fire training grants system delivers conditional grants to regional training centres situated throughout the province, which will allow more firefighters than ever before to attend certified training courses.

Communicating with stakeholders is a priority of the Alberta Government, and making the province a safe place to live takes a great deal of co-operation from stakeholders and the public. *Alberta Fire News* has helped facilitate that co-operation by providing an effective way for the Public Safety Division to keep Albertans informed about the many initiatives that are underway to maintain and improve the provincial safety system. 🔥

Juvenile firesetter intervention resources from the FCO

Resources	Description
FEMA Juvenile Firesetter Handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juvenile firesetting intervention program
TAPP-C Juvenile Firesetter package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian juvenile firesetting intervention program
FCO's Juvenile Firesetter Handbook and Resource Directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is juvenile firesetting Juvenile firesetter statistics in Alberta Prevention strategies for parents, schools and the fire service FEMA intervention strategies Additional resource materials Fire and counselling service directory
FCO's juvenile firesetter brochure titled "Fire: It's No Game for Children to Play."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fire safety guide for parents and caregivers

For more information on juvenile firesetter intervention programs and/or resources contact Te-Jay Smart at the phone number above or via e-mail at: te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca.

Changes in fire electronic reporting

Fire Electronic Reporting System

In previous issues of *Alberta Fire News*, we introduced you to the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) Fire Electronic Reporting System (FERS). FERS allows fire departments to electronically submit, view, edit and print their fire incident reports online. The electronic fire reporting system will increase the FCO's ability to offer current, accurate and meaningful statistics for use in developing corresponding fire prevention and safety materials, and to help municipalities develop fire protection master plans.

FERS users (via *milenet* online)

- The program that validates data and flags errors is continually being monitored and improved.
- Continual FERS enhancements are being implemented to meet the requests and needs of the fire departments using FERS.
- FERS has been enhanced to allow fire departments to view and print their finalized and un-finalized reports. A new search tab ("view finalized")

has been added to the "My Events" screen. To have finalized records deleted or edited, fire departments will still be required to contact the FERS application administrators:

- Gloria Mercer – (780) 415-0548, e-mail gloria.mercer@gov.ab.ca
- Val Carmody – (780) 427-1878, e-mail val.carmody@gov.ab.ca
- FERS has also been improved to allow fire departments to edit their "fire event details" on the "My Events" screen. To have the "fire events details" deleted, fire departments will still be required to contact the FERS application administrators at the FCO, as above.

Electronic fire reporting using private software vendors

- Upgrades to the file interface specifications document are scheduled for December 2004.
- Reports submitted via e-mail from private software vendors, including the city of Edmonton, are successfully being uploaded into FERS by FCO staff.

Fire departments submitting hard copy fire reports

- PDF fillable report forms are available on the FCO website.

milenet

- 89 per cent of municipalities have signed the *milenet* agreement (revised or original).
- 105 of the approximately 360 municipalities have assigned FERS access for their fire departments.

2003 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report

Submitted fire incident reports are in the process of being entered for the 2003 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report. Fire departments are reminded to submit their 2003 fire incident reports ASAP for inclusion in this document. Submission of all fire incident reports will help ensure that the statistical report accurately captures the current fire situations in Alberta. 🔥

Making sense of smoke alarm data and home fire deaths

Two-thirds of Alberta fire fatalities occur in homes (one/two family dwellings, apartments and manufactured homes). According to the last published Statistics Canada report, *Household Facilities by Income and Other Characteristics* (1997), 96.2% of all households in Alberta were installed with at least one smoke alarm, located inside the dwelling. However, a statistical analysis of 219 home fire deaths reported during a 10-year period (1994-2003) to the Fire Commissioner's Office showed that only 59% of homes that experienced fires had smoke alarms installed (Table 1).

Table 1. Smoke alarm status in Alberta home fires

Smoke Alarm Installation Status	Fires	% Fires	Deaths	% Deaths
Not installed	6,545	41	94	43
Installed	9,265	59	125	57
Total	15,810	100	219	100

The most notable feature in Table 1 is that more people died in homes with smoke alarms (125 deaths or 57%) than in homes without smoke alarms (94 deaths or 43%). Expressing this data on a number of deaths per 100 fires shows that the difference is merely 6% between homes installed (1.35) and not-installed (1.44) with smoke alarms. This leads to a crucial question: "Why do people die in homes equipped with smoke alarms?" This brief exploratory report, based on a statistical analysis of the 219 home fire deaths, is an attempt to answer this question.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide a breakdown of the 219 home fire fatalities by activation of smoke alarms, and by condition and action of the victims.

Table 2. Smoke alarm status in homes with fatalities

Alarm status	Deaths	%
Not installed	94	43
Activated	34	16
Not activated	29	13
Activation – unknown	62	28
Total	219	100

It is apparent from tables 1 to 4 that the presence of smoke alarms alone does not ensure life safety in home fire emergencies.

A number of other factors influence the survival of persons facing life threatening smoke and fire. The majority of deaths (76%, or 22 out of 29 deaths) in homes

where smoke alarms were present but did not activate occurred where the alarms lacked a source of power (dead or missing battery or household electricity not connected). However, even where smoke alarms activated, 34 deaths happened. The probable causes of these 34 deaths were distributed as follows: smoke inhalation (25, or 74%), burn injuries (4, or 12%), and other injuries (5, or 15%). Activation of smoke alarms is no guarantee that deaths will be averted (see Tables 3 and 4).



Smoke alarms must be properly installed and maintained to be effective

Table 3. Condition of fatalities by smoke alarm status

Condition of fatalities	Deaths	%	NI*	A	NA	U
Asleep at time of fire	54	25	18	9	9	18
Impaired: alcohol/drugs/medication	44	20	19	7	7	11
Physical/mental handicap	6	3	2	2	1	1
Children: too young/unattended	11	5	2	1	1	7
Awake and normal	30	14	12	6	6	6
Condition unknown/unclassified	74	33	41	9	5	19
Total	219	100	94	34	29	62

Table 4. Action of fatalities by smoke alarm status

Action of fatalities	Deaths	%	NI*	A	NA	U
Did not act	44	20	17	3	8	16
Loss of judgment	23	11	10	1	8	4
Injured while attempting escape	26	12	9	4	2	11
Received delayed warning	14	6	6	3	3	2
Entered/remained for rescue/firefighting/ saving property	11	5	3	6	0	2
Heart attack, over-exertion	1	5	0	1	0	0
Condition unknown/unclassified	100	46	49	16	8	27
Total	219	100	94	34	29	62

*Smoke alarm status: NI=Not installed; A=Activated; NA=Not activated; U=Activation unknown.

Note: The sum of NI+A+NA+U = the number of deaths for each action.

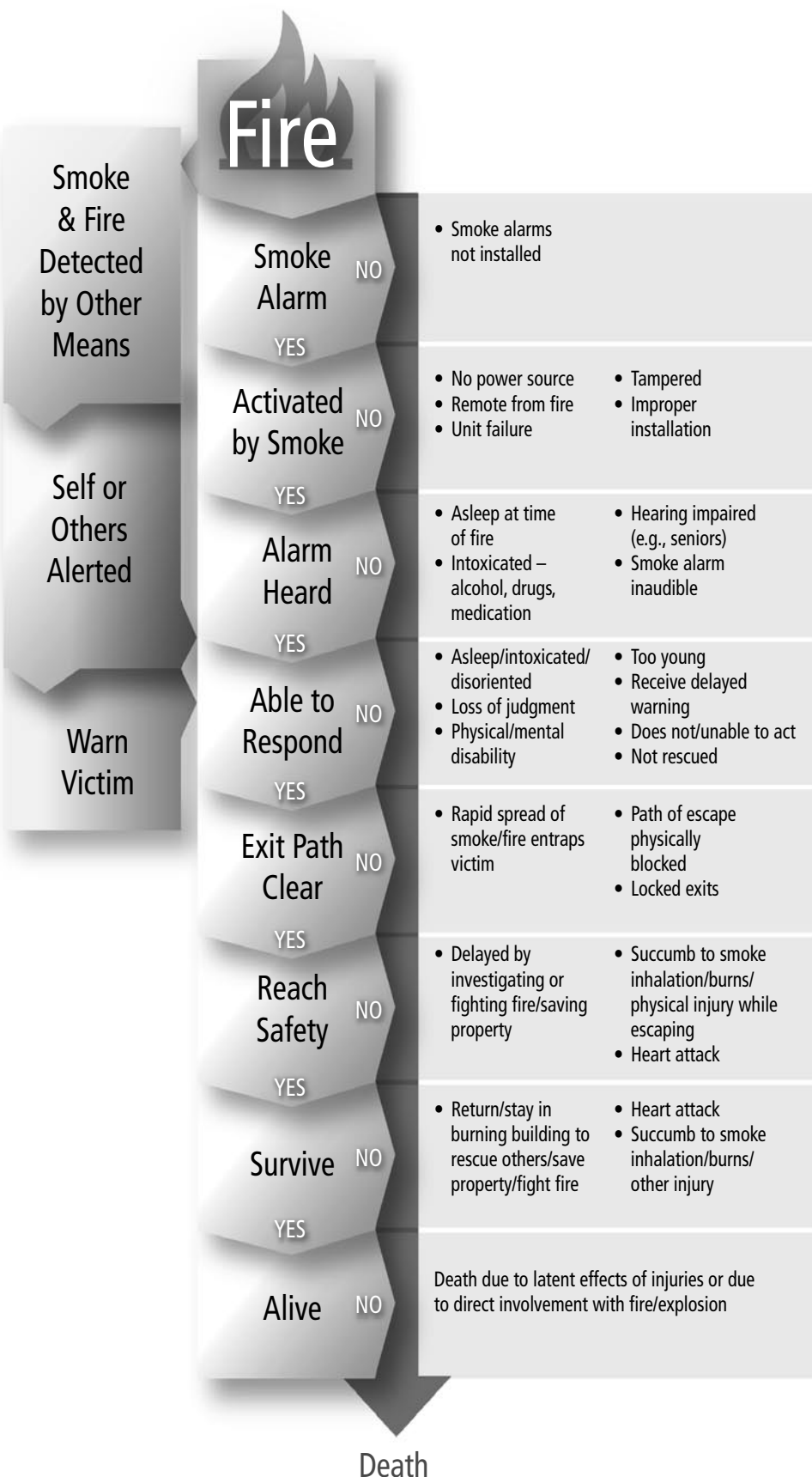
Events leading to fire deaths

Human behaviours during fires vary depending on the stage of the fire. They mainly involve finding the fire, fighting it, notifying others and evacuating. The time taken to decide to evacuate is usually the longest time period in the entire evacuation process, and people tend to underestimate the risk of a fire to

themselves. Many factors determine if a person faced with a home fire emergency reaches safety. Figure 1 provides a flowchart summary of the sequence of events, human conditions and actions that can either lead to survival or death. Smoke alarm activation may be of no assistance to those who are unable to escape a fire due to physical or mental

inability/impairments. Literature also indicates gender differences, with men more likely to fight the fire, and women more likely to warn others. For fire victims directly involved with the fire (e.g., a cooking fire involving ignition of clothing), activation of a smoke alarm may not matter. Eliminating or minimizing the “NO” loops in the chart can be expected to save lives.

Figure 1.
Possible events leading to some fire deaths in Alberta homes



General trends in fatal home fires

Probable causes of death: smoke inhalation (138 deaths, or 63%), burns (35, or 16%), physical injuries (4, or 2%), and all other types of injuries (42, or 19%) accounted for the 219 home fire fatalities.

Time: fatal fires were most likely to occur between 10:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m. (48%); the next most common time was between 6:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. (31%), followed by 2:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. (21%).

Demographics: home fire deaths expressed as a rate per 100,000 population was 0.5 in urban areas (all Alberta cities and Sherwood Park), 1.0 in rural areas, and 5.4 in First Nations communities. Smoke alarms were installed in 71% of urban, 51% of rural and 32% of First Nations homes that had fatalities. However, of the installed alarms only 32% of urban, 27% of rural, and 0% of First Nations homes activated during fatal fires.

High risk groups: the most vulnerable age groups, based on age specific mortality rates (deaths per 100,000), are children under the age of five (0.9), adults aged 31-35 years (0.9), adults aged 46-50 years (0.9) and adults 66 and over (1.6). The adult male to female ratio in the fire fatalities is 1.8:1.

Areas of fatal fire origin: the most common places of fire origin in the 219 home fire fatalities reviewed were: living rooms (28%), bedrooms (25%), kitchens (17%), crawl space (4%), ceiling and floor assembly (3%), and heating equipment room (2%).

Major causes of home fire fatalities: the following fire causes were associated with home fire fatalities: smoking (34%), cooking (13%), arson/set fire (8%), heating equipment-related fire (8%), child fireplay (5%), electrical distribution equipment/lamps (5%), candles (4%), flammable gas/liquid ignition (3%), and all other/unknown (21%).

Conclusions

This brief analysis of Alberta home fire statistics shows that the effectiveness of smoke alarms is limited by a lack of installation and maintenance of smoke alarms, the unsatisfactory mental or physical condition of victims before fire events, and inappropriate actions of victims during fire events. However, this does not mean that the use of smoke alarms be dismissed; rather, it means that fire safety education programs must

continue to stress the value of smoke alarms and fire escape plans as well as create an understanding of:


- the high speed of fire growth in residential fires, and the need to evacuate promptly and call the fire department;
- the dangers of smoke inhalation – the number one cause of fire deaths;
- the vulnerability of specific groups – young children, seniors and those with physical/mental handicaps who are unable to escape safely;

- high risk lifestyles that may incapacitate people to the point that they are unable to respond to a fire emergency, especially during sleeping hours;
- high risk populations such as rural, First Nations and those living in socio-economically disadvantaged communities;
- the danger of remaining in or re-entering burning buildings to rescue, save property or fight fire;
- special precautions with hearing impaired persons who may need other forms of fire alerting, and installation of extra smoke alarms inside bedrooms where heavy sleepers or young children under 15 sleep as they may sleep through smoke alarms; and
- the causes of fatal home fires in Alberta as revealed by an analysis of fire statistics.



Firefighters deal with a blaze in Redcliff

Reference sources:

1. Marty Ahrens (2003). U.S. Experience with smoke alarms and other fire alarms. NFPA, Quincy, MA 02169-7471, USA.
2. Anna Chalmers (2002). Fire Research Report-Improving the Fire Safety Knowledge & Practices of Vulnerable Groups. New Zealand Fire Service Commission. 

For further information on this study, please contact the author, Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Ph.D., Assistant Fire Commissioner at (780) 415-0546 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton), or via e-mail at: mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca.

Keeping you informed...


Alberta Fire Chiefs Association update

According to all accounts, the 2004 Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Conference in Red Deer was a great success. Attendance was up, with 539 fire service personnel attending the conference this year, as was the number of booths at the conference trade show. There were 125 booths inside with an

additional 35 displays outdoors, which created variety and visual interest in fire-related topics, equipment and materials.

This year also saw 500 people attend the annual barbeque, and 400 attended the conference banquet.



Plans are already underway for next year's conference, which will be held in Jasper. More details will be provided in a future issue of *Alberta Fire News* as well as on the AFCA website – www.afca.ab.ca. 

The changing role of the fire service

Everyone acknowledges that today's hectic lifestyle is a lot different from that of our parents and grandparents. New technology, increased demand and globalization have dramatically changed the ways in which we live and work. But did you realize that these changes have also impacted the fire service?

Firefighters have always served as first responders for any emergency situation, but the scope of these responses has increased dramatically over the years. In addition to responding to typical fire emergencies, firefighters are called upon to deal with a very broad range of other rescues, from vehicle extrication at road collisions to rescue services when someone falls through ice or is trapped on a ferris wheel at an exhibition park. The location of the emergency adds yet another factor to the response equation, particularly for rural fire departments. In addition to having mostly volunteer firefighters, rural fire department calls can include animal rescue, such as an overturned truck with 30-40 head of loose or trapped livestock, or entrapment or entanglement in farm machinery by farm workers.

In addition to location challenges, weather often plays a crucial role. Alberta's winter weather provides a host of challenges, both in terms of driving on icy, slippery roads as well as the very real possibility of firefighting water supplies freezing at extreme temperatures.


Another growing challenge is responding to hazardous materials or dangerous goods incidents. This can include anything moved by rail, truck or pipeline – from hydrocarbons to anhydrous ammonia. Add to that the potential for acts of terrorism, and it's clear that the fire service is involved in response situations that didn't even exist many years ago.

Another important consideration is training. Training has always been a difficult area to manage but with the addition of an ever-changing and growing diversity of duties, this demanding area can put considerable stress on a fire department, including the funding needed for extended training requirements.

Firefighters are also involved in a diverse variety of fire prevention activities, including the inspection of various structures as well as the presentation of prevention and safety messages to several different audiences – from school children to seniors – and participation in a multitude of charity events throughout each year. Additionally, there are many administrative duties such as paperwork, reports, payrolls, training, and Occupational Health and Safety requirements to deal with. The fire service is also tasked with investigating the cause and origin of all fire incidents.

Recognizing the changing role of the fire services is the thrust behind the Alberta

Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC). Established by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the FSAC is charged with providing counsel to the Minister on fire-related issues across Alberta. "Working with representative fire personnel throughout Alberta, the committee is looking at the changing role of the fire service, both in terms of activities and personnel," said Pat Graham, Alberta Fire Commissioner and Chair of the FSAC. "Firefighters are in a unique position in that they step into danger when everyone else is running away from it. In addition to looking at the changing expectations for service, we are also looking at the wear and tear on firefighters and the demands placed on them."

As society changes, so does the fire service. Just as technology has become an integral part of most people's lives, so too has it impacted on the fire service. As more young people move into urban areas, those wishing to retire to a more peaceful lifestyle are choosing to move away from the cities. All of these changes are beginning to have an impact on the fire service. Through the FSAC, fire personnel from across the province are making sure that counsel is being provided to those who have the authority and responsibility to ensure that fire services receive the support that will enable them to respond to the developing needs throughout Alberta. 

Fire Commissioner's Office regional update

Changing the way of doing business...

The Operations Section of the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is currently focused on two major program areas: the 2003-04 Fire Services



Training Initiative and the Seconded Services Program, both of which are high priorities for the FCO.

Fire Services Training Initiative

There were significant changes made to the Fire Services Training Initiative this year. A total of 29 sites were selected to help co-ordinate training courses and opportunities across the province. These sites are hosting and facilitating courses that are being made available to all fire

departments. A package of information was distributed to every fire department and municipality in Alberta outlining the host locations, contact information and course offerings. To enroll in a course please contact the host site directly or call your regional Fire Safety Officer for more information.



The FCO will be touring the province to monitor the progress of the current grant program and to begin discussions with interested groups for future modifications to the program. Our field officers will be assisting in setting up regional meetings to help explore areas of cooperation in training. We would like to encourage any and all persons and organizations with an interest in fire service training to provide their input. This will assist us in improving the grant programs to better address your training needs. Feel free to contact our Field Staff or contact

us directly in Edmonton. For more information on the initiative, see page 5.

Seconded Services

In the Seconded Services Program we are continuing to develop and implement agreements with service providers across Alberta to assist us in providing investigational support services. Other services will be added as time goes on. The purpose of the project is to ensure that when a fire department contacts the FCO for assistance we can offer the

best support quickly and efficiently. The FCO Duty Officer receives all calls for assistance and will be responsible to dispatch the appropriate resource to the request. If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact your Regional Office or the Edmonton office for details. 🔥

Note: to call the Edmonton office, dial (780) 427-8392 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside of Edmonton).

New faces at the Fire Commissioner's Office

Putting the spotlight on...

Two new staff additions reflect the expanding area of focus for the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO).

Spence Sample

Through his considerable experience as a firefighter, combined with four years as a lawyer, Spence brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his position with the Government of Alberta, which began in April 2004. Spence divides his time between Sharek Logan Collingwood and van Leenen LLP, focusing primarily in the emergency services law field, and the Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs, focusing primarily on projects within the FCO. Most of his firefighting career, though, was with the City of Edmonton Fire Department. Through his 18 years with the fire department, he rose to the position of Deputy Fire Chief.

In addition to providing technical advice to the Fire Service Advisory Group, Spence's responsibilities also include legislative review and development and developing new liaisons with First Nations firefighters in co-operation with Judy Harvie, as well as developing policies and procedures for the FCO. Spence is also working on the development of templates to assist fire service personnel in the creation/ revision of bylaw and mutual aid agreements.



Spence Sample

Judy Harvie

Through a co-operative venture with **fire etc.**, Judy Harvie has been seconded to Alberta Municipal Affairs as the Aboriginal Advisor to the FCO. Her NFPA 1001 Firefighter-Emergency Medical Technician training and related experience in Vermilion, combined with her knowledge as a Safety and Loss Prevention instructor at **fire etc.**, make her the ideal person for this newly-created position. Although she's only been in the position for a couple of months, Judy has already been busy building relationships with various organizations to encourage support for Aboriginal fire and safety issues. These relationships include liaisons with

Pearl Calahasen, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nations of Alberta, as well as key individuals from the Strategic Training Initiative, the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Association (Judy attended their conference in Vancouver in May), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and many Aboriginal leaders from across Alberta. Working together with Spence Sample and Assistant Fire Commissioner Mahendra Wijayasinghe to deliver presentations within Alberta communities, Judy is working hard to ensure that messages about fire safety, prevention and loss management reach their intended audiences. 🔥



Judy Harvie

You were asking...?

Q&A's about Alberta's Safety Codes

Q. What qualifications are needed for persons who clean commercial cooking equipment exhaust systems?

A. There has been some activity in the industry that will affect commercial cooking equipment exhaust cleaning services. Both exhaust cleaners and authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) have been asking what qualifications are needed and where a person can become qualified.

The present Alberta Fire Code does not require kitchen system cleaners to be qualified; however, there has been a code change proposal made



Ray Ligenza, Calgary and Ray Cox, Edmonton

and accepted for inclusion in the next Alberta Fire Code. The code change will require any person who inspects and cleans commercial cooking exhaust systems to be qualified.

Currently, Fire Code STANDATA bulletin 97-FCB-023, "Cleaning Commercial Cooking Equipment," addresses this subject by providing an overview of what AHJs and the industry can expect to see in the next code.

Further to this, AHJs and the industry are working with the Alberta Fire Safety Association to develop a workable system for qualifying kitchen

Questions about Alberta's Safety Codes?

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

system cleaners. Bulletin 97-FCB-023 provides options for persons currently doing this type of work. With the next code we anticipate the options may be refined so that all cleaners have a good grasp of the code and the NFPA 96 standard.

More information will be available once the new Alberta Fire Code is in force and the industry establishes an appropriate standard for competency. 🔥

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

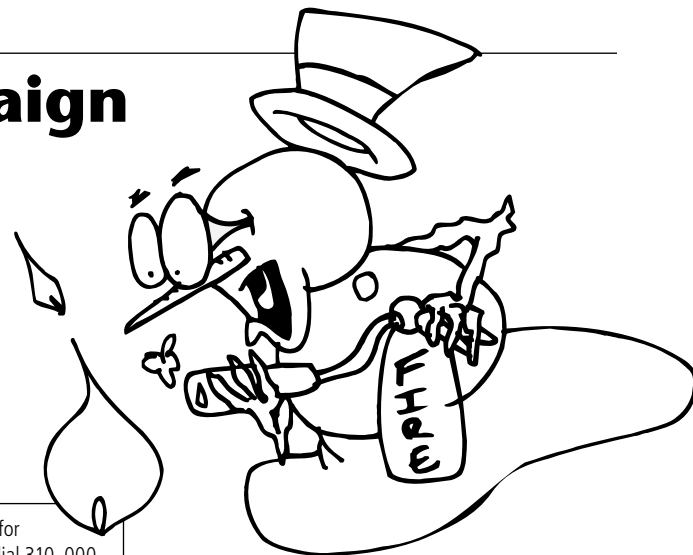
Staying fire safe over the holidays

Holiday Fire Safety Campaign

The 2004 Holiday Fire Safety Campaign, co-ordinated by the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), takes place December 15-31. Campaign information will be posted on the FCO website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco in late November. In addition to identifying holiday fire losses, common holiday hazards and corresponding safety tips, there will also be sample advertisements and Public Service Announcements, children's fire safety activities, and cartoons and

graphics. Fire departments are encouraged to use the components of this kit to implement fire prevention and safety activities and announcements in local schools, communities and the media. 🔥

Please contact Te-Jay Smart at the FCO for further assistance at (780) 644-4692 (dial 310-000 for toll free access outside Edmonton), or via e-mail at te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca.



Digest

Beaumont's safety fair a winner

Despite a downpour, the Beaumont Safety Fair, held on May 29, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Beaumont Curling Rink, was a huge success. With a diverse range of safety-related activities and display booths – from a firehouse demonstration, expired or unused drug disposal and a trampoline safety clinic to the free smoke detector and battery replacement program registration and car seat inspection clinic, to name a few – the event provided fun and education for town residents. “It is a lot of work to organize but worth it if it means saving even one life,” said Ginette Traversy Ens, Fire & Safety Officer, Beaumont Fire Department. “The safety fair is based on the *Risk Watch* program, and involving the community with such a great event promotes the safety messages among their peers and own families.”



One of the many displays at the Beaumont Safety Fair

Keeping you informed

Starting in the December 2004 issue of *Alberta Fire News*, we plan to include a column listing promotions, appointments, retirements and deaths of fire service personnel throughout Alberta. As *Alberta Fire News* is a provincial publication on behalf of all fire services throughout the province, we encourage the submission of information about fire service personnel. Please send your information to Te-Jay Smart at the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) at te-jay.smart@gov.ab.ca, or by phone at (780) 644-4692 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton).

Alberta fire service activities calendar – 2004

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
Summer Fire Safety Campaign	May 1 - September 1	FCO
Provincial Hose Coupling Competition	August 13 - 14	Camrose
Wabamun Fire Department AESM ceremony	August 14	Wabamun
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo AESM ceremony and memorial service	October 3	Fort McMurray
Fire Prevention Week	October 3 - 9	FCO
Cochrane Fire Department AESM ceremony and ball	October 23	Cochrane
Fort Saskatchewan Fire Department AESM ceremony	November 27	Fort Saskatchewan

Saying goodbye

Russell Roy Williams, who served with the Edmonton Fire Department, died on May 26, 2004. Russell dedicated his life to saving lives and helping those in need. Prior to joining the Edmonton Fire Department, Russell served in the army in WWII in one of the most elite fighting units in history – the First Special Service Force, also known as “The Devil's Brigade.”

Same name, different location

Lorne Thompson, former Deputy Fire Chief with the Town of Banff, has moved to Drumheller, where he is the new Fire Chief for the Town of Drumheller.

We need your badge!

The Fire Commissioner's Office needs your help to complete their fire department badge display. Designed to include a badge from every fire department across Alberta, the finished display will provide a visual and informative overview. Please remember to send in a badge from your department.

Fire Extinguisher Day in Granum

The Granum Fire Department's 2004 Fire Extinguisher Day took place on May 1, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In addition to pop and barbecued burgers, participants were able to review the Hazard House, brought by the FCO's Kevan Jess, watch Kost Fire Equipment's Doug Brown re-supply fire extinguishers and see the Jaws of Life demonstration.

Redwood Meadows celebrates!

Firefighters with the Redwood Meadows Fire Department had two reasons to celebrate. In addition to Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham presenting Alberta Emergency Services Medals, fire service personnel were celebrating the newly named Magnusson Memorial Fire Station, named after Mike Magnusson, who helped build the Redwood service in 1978.

Staying informed about fire bans

If you're looking for information on wildfire updates throughout Alberta, the most up-to-date details are available on Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's website at: www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/wildfires/fpd/sitrep.htm.

Surfin' the net

If you haven't visited the FCO website recently, you may be surprised at how much information is available. From safety alerts and publications, to back issues of *Alberta Fire News* and information about the *Risk Watch* program, there's a wealth of information to assist fire service personnel. A recent addition to the website is information about the International Fire Service Accreditation. Check it all out at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco



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

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ISSN 0848-6794

Making the community a safer place

Celebrating 40 years of service

Fighting fires. Responding to emergencies. Saving lives and property. For Brooks volunteer firefighter Joe Yarrow, it's a way of life he's enjoyed for the last 40 years. On May 8, 2004 – Joe's 64th birthday – the Brooks Fire Department hosted a ceremony to recognize Joe for all he has done for the community.

"Joe's desire to help people is what has kept him motivated to volunteer as a firefighter for the last 40 years," said Brooks Fire Chief Kevin Swanson. "He's an extraordinary person and we're thrilled to have him on our team."

Born in Selkirk, Manitoba, Joe grew up wanting to be a firefighter or a policeman. At 21, he moved to Brooks and began working at a grocery store across the street

from the town fire hall. When one of the firefighters encouraged Joe to volunteer, he jumped at the chance.

Joe's first major fire call was in 1965 when Nalley's Chip Factory, an all-wooden structure, was engulfed in fire. "Responding to fire calls can be scary but knowing that I'm helping people in my community makes me very proud," he said. Joe says there are too many memorable calls to list, but a few of them do stand out. For example, the elevator fire that became one of the few in all of Western Canada to be successfully extinguished while the elevator was still

standing and the warehouse fire that caused an explosion which engulfed the fire truck Joe was driving are but two of his many memorable experiences.

Currently employed as an operator at Encana Corporation, Joe enjoys spending time with his wife, their two children and three grandchildren. He also likes to



Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham presenting volunteer firefighter Joe Yarrow with a plaque recognizing his 40 years of active service with the Brooks Fire Department

stay active. In 2001, Joe became the oldest competitor in the Canadian Firefighters Combat Challenge, an event that tests firefighters' strength and endurance while completing an obstacle course dressed in full gear. Joe trained hard and was successful. "It was one of the greatest moments of my life," he said.

Joe's advice for anyone thinking about becoming a volunteer firefighter is to give it a try. "Giving back to your community is worth every safety risk," he said. Joe also encourages everyone to donate blood, something he has continued to do since 1962. To date he has given 330 units. 