



Alberta

FIRE NEWS

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Industrial Heartland—fire service & industry working together

Emergency response is at the heart of a unique partnership between four municipalities.

The Industrial Heartland is a partnership of four municipalities—Strathcona County, County of Lamont, Fort Saskatchewan and Sturgeon County—with common interests in industrial development.

The Heartland encompasses 130 square kilometres but, says Larry Wall, executive director of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, its industrial development potential depends on a broad range of elements from feedstock companies, roads, pipelines and utilities to factors such as people, knowledge and education. There are more than 20 major industrial players in the area, and the region has \$21 billion in total development, including the Strathcona industrial area.

Wall describes the Heartland as an emerging area comparable to some developed industrial areas in the United States—like Louisiana or Texas—or other areas such as Singapore, England, or Europe. "Our region is probably more diverse. The Heartland has a range of industries including agricultural processing, fertilizers, recycled steel, and fiberglass," he says.



Above: Shell Canada emergency response personnel train on the Shell Chemical training grounds using a propane Christmas tree.

Left: Lamont Fire Department sets up for a practice on a liquid petroleum gas fire at the Shell training grounds in June.



High-level emergency response capability is a key component of the relationship between industry and residents of the area. Driving the Industrial Heartland's business plan is the need to manage conflicting land uses, coordinate emergency services between industry and municipalities, address environmental concerns (air quality and infrastructure) and provide utilities and transportation. "By operating in this region, companies are going to have the best of infrastructure, environment and a profitable bottom

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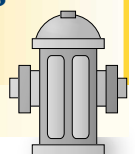
The Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office wishes you and your families a safe and happy holiday season.

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Upcoming Events

Holiday Hazards "Wrap Them Up!"
Dec. 15 – 31 (see page 18)



A snapshot of the Picture Butte Fire Department

The Picture Butte Fire Department has come a long way. Community fundraising efforts and, in some cases, additional provincial government grant money, have allowed the department to purchase equipment and upgrade rescue services. The most impressive additions to the department are an ambulance service including the ambulance itself, and a Surface Ice Rescue Service.

Some other results of the department's successful fundraising efforts include 20 sets of new turn-out gear, eight breathing apparatus, five mobile radios, extrication equipment, a defibrillator, and an SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) compressor and cascade system. "We get tremendous support from the community when we fundraise," says Sam West, fire chief of the Picture Butte Fire Department.

West has been with the Picture Butte Fire Department for 13 years, four as fire chief. West, who works during the day as a Mechanic Supervisor for Palliser Regional Schools, says he's gained a lot from volunteer firefighting—knowledge of the fire service industry, as well as many friendships within and outside the fire service.

In addition to the fire service, the department also operates an ambulance service that covers 1630 square kilometres in the northern part of the County of Lethbridge, including the Town of Picture Butte. It currently has three Emergency Medical Technicians-Ambulance (EMT-As) and four Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) on board. An EMR course is offered at the fire department in conjunction with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary; five personnel are enrolled in this course. The department also hopes to offer the EMT-A course this spring, again through SAIT.

West cites community involvement and helping people as his motivation for becoming a volunteer firefighter. That "community" includes the Town of Picture Butte, as well as a 1040 square kilometre area in the northern



part of the County of Lethbridge. The Picture Butte Fire Department is responsible for these regions, which combined, have a population of over 3,600 residents.

Because this is an agriculture-based area with many feedlots, the department deals with numerous hay and straw fires. West says the biggest challenge his department faces when fighting these fires is to keep them from spreading, especially in years as dry as this one. Average volunteer response time to the fire hall is approximately three to five minutes.

There are 24 volunteers in the fire department and they come from a number of different professions and trades—welder, mechanic, golf course attendant and carpenter to name a few. The average length of service in the department is 10 years. After the first year of service, in which volunteers receive in-house train-

Sparky pays a visit to the Picture Butte Fire Department's booth at a local trade show. (Left to right: Dan Tulley, Deputy Chief Dave Feist, Sparky, and Fire Chief Sam West)

Provincial Championship Hose Coupling Competition Results

The 2000 Hose Coupling Competition was held August 19 in Picture Butte. Twelve teams competed in the fire department event and six were in the fun competition.

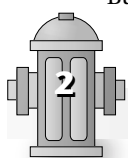
Fire Department Competition

Ranking	Team	Time in seconds
First	Olds	140.57
Second	Picture Butte	143.81
Third	Vegreville	164.85

Fun Competition

Ranking	Team	Time in seconds
First	Olds	124.30
Second	Picture Butte	139.90
Third	Millet	146.68

ing, they are encouraged to take additional courses that further increase their firefighting knowledge and skills. The department trains every Wednesday night in the fire hall.



Chief West and Tony Pickard, administrative officer of fire services, try hard to keep the team interested. They do this by bringing in new courses such as Firefighting Strategies and Command through the Alberta Fire Training School. Firefighter I and Pump A courses are taught in the area and last year the fire department hosted a Firefighter II course. Pickard has been with the Picture Butte Fire Department since 1993 as a volunteer and in a full-time administrative position since 1995. His is the only paid position in the department.

Recruiting and keeping volunteers is sometimes a challenge. The department fosters public interest and awareness by hosting a number of events including a Community Appreciation Day and an open house in the fire hall. Firefighters also installed and continue to maintain playground equipment in the community's Lions Park and help out with many community events. Every second year the department participates in a local trade show.



A member of the Strathcona County Emergency Services Department tests his skills in the 2000 Hose Coupling Competition August 19 in Picture Butte.

The Picture Butte Fire Department works with the Lethbridge Fire Department to promote the *Learn Not to Burn* program. Firefighters send program binders to all school libraries and they give each Kindergarten to Grade 3 classroom its own binder. They do this for both schools in Picture Butte, as well as the two rural elementary schools and the Hutterite Colony School.

The *Risk Watch* program was introduced this past September in local schools, and Pickard is positive about the program and



the effect it will have on students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. "It is something different from *Learn Not to Burn*," says Pickard. He likes the idea of offering students something new in the area of fire and injury prevention to keep the message fresh in their minds.

Each spring the fire department gives a mock demonstration of a motor vehicle accident for high school students showing the realities of drinking and driving. In past years, in cooperation with the local RCMP, the *Party Program* has focused on Grade 9 students—allowing them to tour the emergency ward of the regional hospital and hear presentations about the dangers of drinking and driving. "It's worked very well," says Pickard. "The speakers talk on the kids' level." The department also discusses kitchen safety and conducts demonstrations on fire extinguishers for students in shop programs and home economics classes.

The Picture Butte Fire Department conducts approximately 30 lectures and fire hall tours each year, primarily for elementary school children. There are also visits to schools to set up learning centres with basic fire safety information such as exit fire drills and home escape plans. Pickard also works with a pre-school that has purchased the *Learn Not to Burn* program.


Ms. Rhonda Bedard presents the Olds Fire Department with the Murray Bedard Memorial Shield for placing first overall in the Provincial Hose Coupling Competition August 19 in Picture Butte. (Left to right: Gary Ratke, Josh Herman, Rhonda Bedard, Leonard Brandon, Jason Kjorsvik, and Chris Andrew)

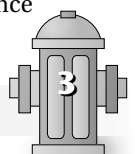
Department award

In 1997, the Picture Butte and District Chamber of Commerce recognized the dedication and service of the Picture Butte Fire Department by presenting it with an annual citizens' achievement award.

During Fire Prevention Week, the department distributes a fire safety activity book produced by Gateway Publishing. The purchase of this

book was sponsored by local businesses and so far, Grades 4 to 6 have benefited from the information presented in the fire safety book.

There is a mutual aid agreement between the Picture Butte Fire Department, the County of Lethbridge, the City of Lethbridge and other communities within the municipality including Coaldale, Barons, Nobleford, and Coalhurst. The department has added a quick response pumper and ambulance to its stable of equipment, expanded the fire hall by two bays to a total of six and instituted a 9-1-1 central dispatch in the area. Equipment includes a 2000 Fort Garry 1,050 gallons per minute mid-ship pumper, a 1976 Saskatoon 840 GPM front-mounted pumper, rapid response mini-pumper, rescue truck, personnel/command van and an ambulance. West says, "we've come a long way just since I've become chief." 



The Vegreville Fire Department— volunteers in action

Ten-year-old Melanie Sawatsky knew how to get her family out safely from their burning home thanks to a contest run by the Vegreville Fire Department. Melanie and her nine-year-old brother Paul won the fire department's annual Great Escape Contest for the best family fire escape plan in October 1999. Days after firefighters recognized their win by driving Paul to school in a fire truck, Melanie used the winning plan to evacuate her family safely from their burning home. Melanie received a St. John Ambulance Certificate of Commendation for her efforts.

It's stories like this that motivate Vegreville's firefighting volunteers to educate their community about fire prevention. "We're very aggressive with fire prevention," says Jerrold Lemko, Fire Chief for the Vegreville Fire Department. The department and safety codes officers conduct fire inspections and pre-fire planning. Firefighters visit local seniors' lodges, teaching what to do in the event of a fire emergency, identifying hazards and doing walk-through inspections. The department also has a Fire Prevention Captain who is instrumental in conducting school visits and performing fire extinguisher and general fire safety training in the community.

Two years ago, during Fire Prevention Week, the department brought Chief Life Line, a trailer designed to educate the public about fire prevention, to about 600 students. This fall the department will be helping teachers introduce the *Risk Watch* program in elementary classrooms.

"I've always been a volunteer ... it's a part of my life," says Lemko, who has been with the department 10 years, serving as Chief for the past three. He joined the fire service because he wanted to do something beneficial for the community. The camaraderie among volunteers and between organizations outside the team is also a large part of Lemko's

reason for committing time and energy to the fire service.

This spring, 13 members participated in a Farm Accident Rescue course—an emergency response course on how to handle emergencies involving livestock offered by Alberta Farm Animal Care Association. The department also held a course dealing with farm industry accidents. Lemko and his team are planning a junior firefighter program involving high school students in work experience similar to programs currently running in Redwater, Alberta and Biggar, Saskatchewan.

The Firefighter's Club fundraises for equipment, with events such as the Father's Day Demolition Derby and a pancake breakfast during Fire Prevention Week. Lemko says a core group of volunteers who, along with their partners, work together to organize department functions such as golf and softball tournaments and the hose coupling teams.

Town council supports the department by approving funds for training, gear, and the construction of a new hall, which was built two years ago. Next year, Vegreville hopes to purchase a new pumper for the department. Lemko states, "Without this council we would never be where we are. There's never a fight. They're very proactive."

The Town of Vegreville has a population of just over 5,000 and is located 80 kilometres east of Edmonton on Highway 16. The department is responsible for an area of 500 square kilometres.

Vegreville, which is within the County of Minburn, is one of only a few provincial areas with a Rural Fire Protection Association. The association membership consists of farmers in the area, and the department has a good working relationship with this



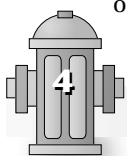
Fire department facts

Thanks to the support of the Vegreville Town Council, the department has been able to upgrade their services with the addition of some new equipment such as a 1994 RAM Charger Command Unit and a GMC 2000 Rescue Unit that made its first trip July 19 to a motor vehicle accident in which nobody was seriously injured. Lemko and his staff also purchased a 36-kilowatt Kubota generator through a federal government grant.

There are 26 volunteers on the team. The Vegreville Fire Department is a well-trained group: 24 of the members have Part I Firefighter, 14 have Part II, six members have Part III, four have Part IV, and three firefighters have Part V and VI. Eighteen members are trained as Pump A Operators, 11 as Safety Codes Officers, 11 members are trained in fire cause and determination, and three in Strategy and Tactics (C-5). Lemko and his team have participated in a number of courses: Safe Entry to Confined Spaces, Ice Rescue, Stress Debriefing, Emergency Public Warning System, and Disaster Services.

rural firefighting association. The Vegreville department houses the association's equipment and provides assistance for members' fires. They also fight wild land fires in the County of Minburn.

The department trains on Monday nights at the five-bay fire hall. One of these bays is leased to Prairie Emergency Medical Services, which has a strong working relationship with the fire department. Several of the EMTs also serve as volunteer firefighters. 🔥



Incendiary fires in Alberta

Incendiary fires are those that are deliberately set, and include arson and vandalism/mischief fires. These contribute significantly to the total fire picture in Alberta. In this article we analyze these fires for the 10-year period 1990-1999 and provide an overview of the magnitude of the problem.

Data from the Fire Statistics Information System (FSIS) at the Fire Commissioner's Office was analysed to characterize incendiary fires by type, most vulnerable property classes and other factors.

There were 13,990 incendiary fires reported in Alberta during 1990-1999. These fires claimed 23 lives, caused 380 injuries and resulted in \$182 million in property losses (Table 1).

Including these fires, the total number of fires in Alberta was 68,813, causing 367 deaths, 4,319 injuries and \$1.2 billion in property losses. Of these, incendiary fires were responsible for 20 per cent of the incidents, 6 per cent of the deaths, 9 per cent of the injuries and 15 per cent of the dollar losses. For the last five years of the period in review, incendiary fires accounted for 21 per cent of all fires, or one in every five fires in the province.

Table 1 also provides a breakdown of the types of incendiary fires. Arson accounted for most deaths, injuries and property damage among all incendiary fire types. Incendiary fires of the undetermined type accounted for 24 per cent of all incendiary fires, and for the second largest number of deaths, injuries and property damage.

The 10-year incidence of arson, vandalism/mischief and undetermined incendiary fires and their property damage in dollars are presented in Table 2. The number of arson fires during the last five-year period has consistently been lower than the 10-year annual average of 487. However, vandalism/mischief fires during the last five-year period have either exceeded or hovered around the 10-year annual average of 561.

Property classes vulnerable to incendiarism

Two criteria were used to evaluate the vulnerability of various property classes to incendiarism. They were:

- The percentage contribution of each property class to the total number of incendiary fires.
- The percentage of incendiary fires

versus the percentage of all other types of fires within each property class.

Table 3 provides data to illustrate the vulnerability from these two perspectives. In addition, the table also provides the percent breakdown of dollar losses from incendiary fires versus all other fires.

The 23 property classes identified in Table 3 represented 81 per cent of all incendiary

Table 1. Incendiary fires in Alberta: 1990 – 1999

Type	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	\$ Losses
Vandalism	5,612	0	46	19,321,924
Arson	4,875	13	179	104,776,937
Undetermined*	3,417	10	150	55,806,419
Fire set by child**	85	0	4	1,913,388
Other	1	0	1	75
Total	13,990	23	380	181,818,743

* Arson or other set fires that are unclassified or where motivation or reason cannot be determined.
 ** Fire set by child under 12 years.

Table 2. Arson, vandalism and undetermined incendiary fire losses

Alberta: 1990 – 1999						
Year	Arson		Vandalism/ Mischief		Undetermined Incendiary	
	Fires	\$ Losses	Fires	\$ Losses	Fires	\$ Losses
1990	301	10,115,109	482	1,386,748	389	8,408,759
1991	593	12,844,680	643	3,272,262	402	3,805,878
1992	650	10,500,060	565	846,165	326	4,597,721
1993	558	12,428,085	509	1,271,087	351	5,462,309
1994	557	8,449,915	443	1,777,038	323	4,353,372
1995	438	6,656,510	661	1,078,138	295	9,204,421
1996	421	10,331,466	548	1,031,853	290	4,900,605
1997	431	12,263,663	693	1,771,517	303	3,170,544
1998	470	9,629,424	560	1,074,641	382	6,941,347
1999	453	11,558,025	557	5,812,475	352	4,961,463
Total	4,872	104,776,937	5,661	19,321,924	3,413	55,806,419

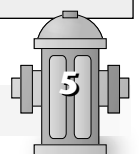


Table 3. Property classes frequently affected by incendiariism

Alberta: 1990 – 1999

Property Class	Fires Within a Property Class					
	Incendiary Fires		Percentage (%)		Percentage (%) \$ Losses from	
	No. of Incendiary Fires	% of all Incendiary Fires	Incendiary Fires	All Other Fires	Incendiary Fires	All Other Fires
Trash/rubbish (including containers)*	2,811	20.1	48.5	51.5	11.0	89.0
Automobile (including car/ambulance)	1,539	11.0	13.5	86.4	20.7	79.3
Fences/poles/railroad ties	969	7.0	53.0	47.0	26.4	73.5
General truck (non-flammable cargo)	957	6.8	12.0	88.0	15.2	84.8
Individual auto parking garage	748	5.4	30.8	69.0	19.1	80.8
One- and two-family dwellings	731	5.2	6.5	93.5	10.0	90.0
Outdoor property – unclassified	560	4.0	50.1	49.1	16.2	83.5
Brush/grass/light ground-cover/open land	409	3.0	22.6	76.7	2.5	97.5
Shed (including implement shed)	387	2.8	27.2	72.5	13.5	86.4
Apartments	313	2.2	16.6	83.4	17.3	82.7
Vacant/condemned property w/o contents	270	2.0	49.5	50.5	33.8	66.2
Paper (product) storage	224	1.6	69.0	31.0	10.4	89.6
Building under construction	142	1.0	42.7	57.3	23.5	76.5
Crops/orchards/straw stacks/bales	141	1.0	14.0	86.0	14.0	86.0
High school and combined high/jr./elem.	125	1.0	74.4	25.6	93.4	6.6
Trees/shrubs individual	120	1.0	48.7	51.3	21.2	78.8
Mobile homes	118	0.8	8.1	82.0	6.8	93.1
Elementary school	109	0.8	63.7	34.5	28.1	72.0
Junior high school	108	0.8	73.1	26.9	81.0	19.0
Electric light/power distribution system	86	0.6	18.0	82.0	22.0	78.0
Privy	81	0.6	80.0	20.0	91.4	8.6
Shelter (bus, storm, etc.)	81	0.6	62.3	37.7	82.6	17.4
All other property classes**	2,648	18.9	—	—	—	—
All incendiary fires	13,990	100.0	39.1	60.7	29.5	70.5

* Values indicate, for example, of all trash/rubbish fires (100%), 48.5% were incendiary and 51.5% were from other causes.

** Each individual property class within this group accounted for less than 0.5% of all incendiary fires.

fires in Alberta. Trash/rubbish (including containers) as well as automobiles are the favourite targets for incendiariism. Caution must be exercised, however, in assigning vulnerability because the number of incendiary fires in each property class is also a reflection of their total number in

the province. For example, one- and two-family dwelling units far outnumber the elementary schools.

From the property classes accounting for a high proportion of incendiary fires in Table 3, it can be seen that incendiary fires assume a high proportion of all fires in the following property classes: trash/rubbish

(including containers); fences/poles/railroad ties; individual auto parking garages; unclassified outdoor property; brush/grass/light ground cover/ open land; shed (including implement shed); vacant/condemned properties without

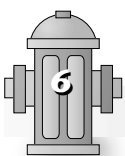


Table 4. Arson vs. vandalism fires in selected vulnerable properties

Alberta: 1990 – 1999				
Property Class	% Arson	% Vandalism/Mischief Fire	% \$ Loss from Arson	% \$ Loss from Vandalism
Trash, rubbish (including containers)	22	78	23	77
Automobile (including car/ambulance)	78	22	85	15
General truck with non-flammable cargo	77	23	85	15
One- and two-family dwellings	83	17	94	6
Individual auto parking garage	56	44	76	24
Apartments	61	39	86	14
Building (construction, demolition or vacant)	56	44	90	10
Brush, grass, light ground-cover, open land	31	69	35	65
Educational institutes	35	65	82	18
Hotels and motels	69	31	99	1

Table 5. Arson and vandalism/mischief fires by type

Alberta: 1990 – 1999					
	Motive/status	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	\$ Losses
Arson	Suspected arson	3,602	7	123	72,338,941
	Revenge	614	3	32	17,083,738
	Crime	357	3	6	10,467,590
	Pyromania	196	0	17	2,334,750
	Fraud	106	0	1	2,551,918
Vandalism/Mischief	Not charged	5,455	0	42	16,774,350
	Charged	157	0	4	2,547,574

Table 6. Arson offences in Canada and Alberta: 1995 - 1999

Year	Actual Arson Offences	Rate / 100,000 Population*	Offences Cleared By Police	Persons Charged by Police			
				Adults Male	Adults Female	Youths Male	Youths Female
1999 Canada	12,763	42	2,470	576	127	475	101
1999 Alberta	946	32	225	53	6	48	10
1998 Canada	12,947	43	2,533	627	144	452	68
1998 Alberta	1,029	35	291	78	20	50	13
1997 Canada	12,693	42	2,574	713	128	566	5
1997 Alberta	1,038	37	268	70	10	50	10
1996 Canada	12,830	43	2,492	674	142	51	55
1996 Alberta	916	33	209	42	6	49	13
1995 Canada	13,156	45	2,702	717	142	600	79
1995 Alberta	1,019	37	267	68	14	47	6

*Rate is the clearance rate for arson calculated by dividing the "number of offences cleared by police" by the "actual number of offences."


contents; paper (product) storage; buildings under construction; high schools; individual trees and shrubs; elementary schools; junior high schools; privies; and bus shelters.

Arson vs. vandalism

Incendiary fires fall into two main categories: arson and vandalism/mischief fires. Arson fires involve the crime of wilfully or recklessly causing fire or explosion that results in damage to property and, in some cases, bodily harm to another person. Sections 433 to 436 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* describe the indictable arson-related offences and their respective penalties. Vandalism/mischief fires involve wilful or malicious damage by fire to private or public property. Section 430 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* describes the offence of mischief in its various forms and sets out punishment for the guilty.

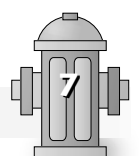
Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of arson and vandalism/mischief fires in selected property classes with a high incidence of incendiary fires. For example, in general trucks with non-flammable cargo arson fires (77 per cent) are three times more likely than vandalism/mischief (23 per cent) fires.

Table 5 provides a break down by motive or type of arson and vandalism/mischief fires, as recorded in the FSIS, in all property classes during the 10-year period 1990 to 1999.

It is clear that in both arson-related fires (74 per cent) and in vandalism/mischief related fires (97 per cent), there are high numbers of "suspected" or "not charged," compared to number of "charged." Further evidence on these low rates of apprehension and bringing perpetrators to justice comes from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, a division of Statistics Canada (Table 6). 

For further information on incendiary fire statistics contact the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392.

Source: Data compiled by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) in Ottawa. Arson offences data is collected by the CCJS from accredited police departments using the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.



First priority—farmyard fire prevention


Farmyard and acreage fires are a major struggle for rural fire departments. They are difficult to control, they cause incredible damage, and they happen far too often. So how can these devastating fires be prevented? By educating farmers about fireproofing their homes, yards, and buildings.

Partners in Protection is an Alberta-based group that has developed the *Firesmart* booklet to increase fire awareness among farmers. The booklet includes information

on recommended building materials and safe burning practices, as well as how to plan a farmyard in order to decrease the likelihood of fire.

The booklet describes the different zones that surround buildings and how these zones should be maintained. For example, any grass within 10 metres of a building should be mowed to 10 centimetres or less. This region is the most critical in firefighting and is referred to as defensible space, as it allows firefighters to

prevent the fire from spreading to surrounding vegetation.

Farmers are also encouraged to have an ample supply of water on hand in case of fire. With this supply, many fires can be extinguished without the assistance of the fire department. 

The *Firesmart* booklet is available to the public free of charge from most fire departments. You can also write to: Partners in Protection, P.O. Box 45047, Landsdowne Postal Station, Edmonton, AB, T6H 5Y1

Clarification on what information to release

Release of fire investigation reports

The Fire Commissioner's Office receives a number of calls each week requesting clarification on releasing reports. To assist us with these questions we contacted Hilary Lynas, from Municipal Affairs Information Management and Privacy Branch.

Comments from the Information Management and Privacy Branch

Section 59 of the *Safety Codes Act* covers the release of information. Under this section, municipal fire services can release reports to the owner of the building or vehicle that is the subject of the investigation. Owner is defined quite broadly in Section 1 (t) of the *Safety Codes Act* to include: a lessee, a person in charge, a person who has care and control and a person who holds himself out as having the powers and authority of ownership or who, for the time being, exercises the powers and authority of ownership.

If an owner requests a copy of the investigation report, the municipality can provide it to the owner. If a lawyer, or other representative of the owner requests the investigation report on behalf of the owner, the municipality can release it with proof that the person is acting with the owner's consent. This

would normally be a letter or form from the owner, giving the municipality consent to release the information to a named individual.

If anyone else requests a copy of an investigation report, the municipality should refuse to release it. The municipality can advise the person to make a request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) for the report, however municipalities generally cannot release investigation reports to non-owners.

If a FOIP request is received for a report, the municipality should review the records and determine whether any of the exceptions in the FOIP Act apply to information in the record. This process includes referring to the *Safety Codes Act*, namely section 59(1)(d), since it is another Act regarding the release of information.

Here are some of the exceptions to disclosure that should be considered:

If the investigation is incomplete, consider whether the release of the records could:

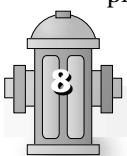
- Harm a law enforcement matter. s.19(1)(a)
- Reveal the identity of a confidential source of law enforcement information. s.19(1)(d)

- Interfere with or harm an ongoing or unsolved law enforcement investigation, including a police investigation. s.19(1)(d.2)

Once the investigation is complete, you will know if it has uncovered information related to law enforcement. If the matter is being referred to the police, the exceptions under section 19 would likely still apply. Another part of section 19 may also apply as disclosure must not reveal any information relating to or used in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion. s.19(1)(d.3)

If there is no law enforcement element in the results of the investigation, section 19 cannot apply to the records. Now you need to consider whether any of the mandatory exceptions to the FOIP Act apply to the release of the investigation. Take a look at:

- s.16, disclosure of personal information. This may include the names of injured victims and other personal information such as employment, health information, financial information of an individual, addresses and other contact information. Similarly, an investigation report may contain personal information about witnesses




that may need to be withheld. Normally the names of individuals acting in an official capacity, such as a fire investigator, firefighter, police officer or government employee, can be released.

- **s.15**, disclosure harmful to the business interests of a third party. If the investigation is about commercial property loss, an investigation report may contain commercial or financial information of a third party that was supplied in confidence, and could cause harm if disclosed. This is a difficult test to meet in the FOIP Act. If the investigation report contains information that may be covered by this mandatory exception to disclosure, the municipality should notify the owners involved and ask for their views about releasing the report. It is likely that if section 15 applies, it would only apply to some sections of the report, and the document would need to have certain information removed before release.

Comments from the Fire Commissioner's Office

If an owner asks for your investigation report under the *Safety Codes Act*, please refer these requests to the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392. We will ensure that the correct report is released to the owner.

If an owner asks you to release information about a fire investigation under the FOIP Act, this request could cover all information in your investigation file including reports, field notes, photos, interviews, drawings, or other documentation gathered during the course of the investigation. Contact your municipal FOIP Coordinator for advice before releasing these records. You can also contact the FOIP Help Desk at the number below to ensure you provide appropriate access to information while protecting the privacy of Albertans. 

For more information please call:

FOIP Help Desk 780-427-5848
or e-mail: foiphelpdesk@gov.ab.ca

Note: This article contains general guidelines to assist you in releasing information. This is not a substitute for legal advice.

New videos acquired by the audio-visual library

The following 20 Safety-Shorts videos, each with a running time between five and seven minutes, are now available from the Alberta Human Resources and Employment library. Please call (780) 427-4671 or go to www.gov.ab.ca/lab/facts/av/audio.html on the Internet.

BAR-B-Q HAL

A humorous presentation on the safe use of an outdoor barbecue.

CHEMICAL BURNS

Victims of chemical burns require immediate special attention. Chemical burns and first-aid treatment are shown.

EGRESS/EXIT SAFETY

Obstructions, exit doors, and how to exit safely in case of fire are the three key points covered in this video.

ELECTRICAL BURNS

Electrical burns can result from unsafe equipment or carelessness. Using actual situations, safety procedures and first-aid treatment are demonstrated.

FIRE ESCAPE-GETTING OUT ALIVE

The best way to survive a fire is to have a fire escape plan. This video shows how to plan ahead so you can get out of fire and smoke alive.

FIRE PREVENTION

There is a mass murderer on the loose. Its name is fire. Using the format of a horror film, you learn that by taking a few simple precautions and keeping your eyes open for fires waiting to happen you can help ensure that you never have to face the terror of a fire at work.

FUELLING A MACHINE

Although a simple procedure, refuelling a machine can be dangerous. Workers are graphically reminded that creativity in the workplace is no substitute for safety.

SPACE HEATERS

A retiring fireman looks back on his firefighting days to alert us to the hazards of portable space heaters.

HOME SAFETY: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Using the tragic examples of deaths that occur in homes, mostly the result of falls, burns, or accidental poisoning, employees are reminded to be aware of potential dangers during everyday activities.

HOT WORK PERMIT

The hazards of hot work are shown along with a discussion of what you can do to reduce the possibility of accidental fires and explosions. The requirement for personal protection equipment and emergency equipment is also discussed. The duties of the Fire Watch when performing hot work are also shown.

OFFICE FIRE PREVENTION

Make fire prevention a part of your work routine. By following a few simple principles shown in this video, you can help reduce the risk of office fires.

OFFICE SAFETY—FIRE PLAN

Planning for fire action is essential to the safety of every office worker. An effective fire plan can help prevent loss of life and personal injury from fire.

OFFICE SAFETY—PERSONAL WORKSPACE

Clutter in the workplace can often get in the way of safety. This video stresses the importance of an orderly work area for keeping hazards at a minimum.

STATIC ELECTRICITY

Static electricity can be a real problem. Solid tips are offered on how to reduce the incidence of static electricity sparks—and their resulting damage.

STAY LOW, STAY ALIVE

In most fires, smoke and toxic gases are the real killers. Most fire deaths are from smoke inhalation, not from flame burns. This video presents the "crawl-low-under-smoke" technique.

THE INVISIBLE KILLER—CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide in the workplace is an invisible killer that strikes without warning. Learn to recognize its symptoms and pick up first-aid procedures to help anyone overcome by this toxic gas.

THERMAL BURNS

When a worker sustains a thermal burn, proper treatment is essential. Graphic illustrations of such burns and proper first aid are shown.

WELDING AND CUTTING SAFETY I

Welding and cutting work is inherently hazardous. This video shows what you need to know to practise your craft without getting "burned."

WELDING AND CUTTING SAFETY II

Welding and cutting work use intense heat to reshape our world. But the same power that creates can also destroy. Find out the safety procedures for welding and cutting.

WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES

Lightning is a powerful and deadly force. Ben Franklin visits the 20th century to learn more about lightning and lightning safety.



On the road with the Bytown Fire Brigade

Imagine a millennium project that allows Canadians to travel back in time as antique fire trucks travel across the country. The idea for the Bytown Fire Brigade's Cross-Canada Millennium Tour took shape three years ago, and on May 25 the brigade left Newfoundland on its way across Canada. The Bytown Fire Brigade's mandate is to preserve and promote the history of firefighting and to encourage fire safety. About 70 per cent of the brigade's members are firefighters, but the lure of the fire service is strong and the brigade has attracted people from all walks of life.

During the cross-country tour, eight to 10 brigade members joined the entourage every two weeks for a shift change. Only two members, co-chair Georges Potvin, and tour co-coordinator and President Peter Ryan, were on-hand for the entire tour. The group kept a gruelling pace—waking at five every morning and putting in 16 to 18 hour days.

Back home behind the scenes, Georges' wife Cecile Denis helped handle logistics for the group. Potvin says when he discussed the prospect of the tour with Cecile, she told him that this trip was going to need a massive organizational team at home. "I didn't tell Cecile that she was the team," he says jokingly.

Potvin says the tour began with a lot of trepidation. "Would we make it? Would it work?" Potvin and Ryan were touched and overwhelmed by the support they received across Canada. The turn-out of residents in smaller rural communities was tremendous. The Newfoundland and New Brunswick leg of the tour was like a parade, says Potvin, and in some locations entire streets were blocked off. The group is looking into the possibility of getting into the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest parade of fire service vehicles.



The Bytown Fire Brigade received a warm welcome during its Edmonton stop on August 10 and 11. Standing in front are Georges Potvin and Peter Ryan. In the back row are Godfrey D'Aoust, Dick Veldhuis, Tim Vandenbrink, and Judy Ryan.

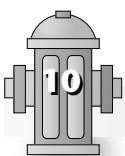
In any undertaking of this magnitude, there are surprises. The budget for this tour was set two years ago, when gasoline was 50 cents a litre. Fuel prices have risen quite substantially since then. There were vehicle breakdowns galore. Generators, starters, fan assemblies, four axles, two complete drive trains, points, plugs, batteries, a complete motor, transmission,

Recognizing the Alberta portion of the tour, the Alberta flag flies aboard the American LaFrance GMT Pumper driven by Godfrey D'Aoust.

pinion gear, and two sets of tires and brakes all had to be repaired en route.

The group sought the support of the fire service to help along the way with accommodation, food and fuel. Potvin estimates that 95 per cent of the fire departments in both major and minor centres provided some form of assistance. The group was billeted in fire station parking lots, people's homes, hostels, motels, hotels, and army barracks.

"It's turned out to be the biggest PR campaign the fire service has ever seen," Potvin says. Godfrey D'Aoust, National Coordinator for Fire Prevention, Public Works and Government Services Canada, was instrumental in helping with fire service liaison along the way—contacting fire marshals and fire commissioners



across the country to get them on board. "We had to work hard to get our sponsorship in place," D'Aoust says. But everything came together. "There is no brotherhood like the fire service."

Even videographer James Moran was caught up in the excitement of the tour. Moran began the millennium tour with the Bytown Fire Brigade in Halifax, working on a video of the trip for an Ottawa-based company. In mid-July, when his company requested he and the camera return to Ottawa, Moran sent the camera back, but he stayed on. He's still taping, with a different camera, for a video that will be ready some time next year.

The tour was welcomed to Alberta by the Lloydminster Fire Department and stopped in Vermilion to meet with the Vermilion Museum Society, representatives from the town and the Alberta Fire Training School. The entourage of antique fire trucks also met with the Vegreville Fire Department to exchange mementos.

The tour was escorted into Edmonton by the Strathcona County Fire Department and RCMP. "In Edmonton we were received like royalty, by both the Edmonton Emergency Response Department and the Police Department," he says.

Members of the fire service met the brigade outside the city's eastern limits and helped them make their way into the city. The group made a stop at Fort Edmonton Park on August 10 and at Canada Place on August 11. That afternoon they visited the Edmonton Firefighter's Memorial on the south side of the city.

Potvin and Ryan were touched and overwhelmed by the support they received across Canada.


The Bytown Fire Brigade was then back on the road to Leduc, and then to the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin. From there they visited Red Deer, Olds, Calgary, Banff, and Lake Louise.

Most of the antique equipment was transported on flatbed trucks through the

Rocky Mountains. Potvin, ever persistent, drove his 1927 Sanford through the mountains. "It was my dream," he says.

The group headed to Victoria in late August and finished up the cross-country trek in Vancouver on September 2. The fire trucks were then shipped back to Ottawa.

Three vehicles made the tour across Canada: a 1927 Sanford Pumper, a 1939 Bickle Ford Pumper and a 1928 American Lafrance GMT Pumper. Potvin has painstakingly restored the Sanford Pumper himself. "I stopped counting after 4,000 hours of restoration, and that was 15 years ago."

Potvin was with the Ottawa Fire Department for 33 years and says you never really retire from the fire service. "It's in my blood. It's what I do." He is already looking forward to his next challenge. "Maybe we'll do a tour across the U.S., who knows what the future holds. Don't tell Cecile yet!" 

For information contact:

The Bytown Fire Brigade
1-2880 Sheffield Road
Ottawa, ON K1B 1A4
Telephone: (613) 744-0595
Web site: www.bytownfirebrigade.ca


Ensuring fire safety within the home

New partnership encourages residential sprinkler systems

Alberta's Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition and the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association are working together to encourage the installation of sprinkler systems in homes. Alberta is serving as a pilot province for a public awareness program called *Protect What You Value Most*. The program package, which includes brochures and a video, is available to fire departments across the province free of charge.

It is important for homeowners to remember that fire prevention devices like sprinkler systems and smoke alarms are only a



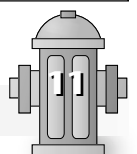
part of ensuring fire safety within a home. Fire prevention is the first priority. A fire escape plan should also be developed and practised regularly in all households. 

To order a Protect What You Value Most information package call:

Fire Commissioner's Office: (780) 427-8392
To call toll-free from anywhere in Alberta, dial 310-0000 and follow instructions.

Or write to:

Fire Commissioner's Office
6th Floor, 10808-99 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0G5



Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs reorganizes

"CAFC is a very viable organization and it's only going to get bigger and better," says Don Warden, president, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC). Two years ago, the not-for-profit national organization found itself heavily in debt and in stiff competition with for-profit organizations.

The CAFC hired Elizabeth Clarke Associates, an eight-person multi-management company with offices in Ottawa and Calgary, to take the reins. The two organizations began informal discussions in late 1999 and a formal agreement was struck in May 2000.

CAFC has experienced a massive reorganization over the past 19 months. Elizabeth Clarke, now the CAFC's chief administrative officer, says, "our mandate was to as quickly and efficiently as possible make a transition from a full-time staff environment to a management-team environment and ensure a seamless transfer. I think we've achieved that so far."


Clarke describes the initial phases of the working relationship between her company and the CAFC as having a few growing pains. The building housing CAFC headquarters in Ottawa was sold in June 1999 and three full-time and two part-time positions were made redundant. Current office space is sub-leased, and to help reduce debt faster, the distribution centre will be moved to allow the lease of more space in the current building.


The reorganization will give CAFC better communication with members, pay down debts faster and provide better service to members. Clarke's team has accountants and lawyers on staff, a professional team working on publications and managers looking after databases. The firm also

Fire Department in Ontario, director of the town's Emergency Services, and manager of its Occupational Health and Safety Program. The CAFC continues to retain the services of Brian Linklater as federal government relations representative for the organization.

Warden says one of the benefits of contracting a multi-management company is gaining the ability to handle the multi-tasks of the CAFC at a more reasonable cost. "It should allow us to pay down our debts quicker," he says.

Communication is a top priority for the CAFC. A one-page highlight of events will be distributed to CAFC members Canada-wide by fax, email or regular mail. CAFC is also promoting its services in national publications such as the *Canadian Fire Chiefs Magazine* and *Fire Services Journal*.

The annual CAFC conference held in August in Montreal was very successful. The trade show was sold out with a waiting list. Some 225 delegates attended. "We think that we've turned the corner," says Warden. 



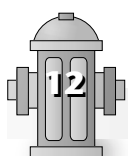
The reorganization will give CAFC better communication with members, pay down debts and provide better service to members.

provided human resource specialists to work with and offer support to CAFC staff who had left. Clarke stresses the job losses had nothing to do with personnel capabilities. "It was strictly a case of finances—seeing where we could cut back."

CAFC membership figures are back up around 1,000. "We're also entering into some other positive initiatives with our partners and membership will be hearing about this as it comes to light," says Warden, also chief of the Wasaga Beach

For more information contact:

Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
Box 11, 232-329 March Road
Kanata, ON K2K 2E1
Telephone: (613) 270-9138 Fax: (705) 429-6732
Email: cafc@igs.net
or
Tania Robert, Association Manager,
Elizabeth Clarke Associates
Post Office Box 1227, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5R3
Telephone: (613) 270-9138 Fax: (613) 599-7027
Email: cafc@igs.net





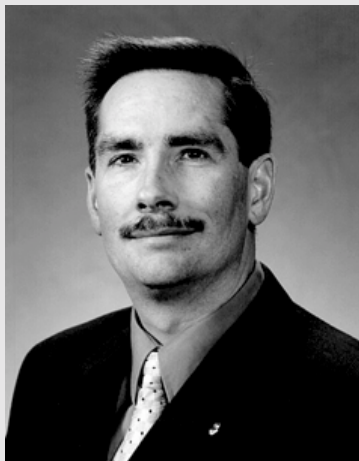
NFPA opens Canadian office

The National Fire Protection Association International (NFPA) opened a Canadian office in Orleans near Ottawa this past summer. Sean Tracey is the Canadian Regional Manager for the NFPA. Having completed a 20-year career in the Canadian military and the last three years as the Canadian Forces Fire Marshal, Tracey knows the importance of communicating the message of fire prevention and fire and safety awareness in Canada.

When Tracey was officially appointed to work in the new NFPA regional office on July 1, he knew the scope of the position would be very broad. Tracey's enthusiasm for his new role is strong, as is his commitment to fire safety and injury prevention education. "We are delighted to have Lt. Colonel Tracey aboard," says George D. Miller, NFPA president. "His excellent leadership skills, along with his impressive fire engineering background increase NFPA's presence in Canada."

Tracey's new position will allow him to improve a broad spectrum of services such as standards, public education and training, that are available to NFPA members and non-members. His immediate goal is to inform the Canadian fire service and others like building officials and public educators that NFPA now has a regional office in Ottawa. He wants to reinforce how this office can help better represent the needs of Canada's fire services. "I hope the important issues and concerns are going to come to the forefront quickly," says Tracey.

Before NFPA chose to set up the new Canadian regional office, consultants interviewed 42 Canadian stakeholders. The research concluded that NFPA should be partnering with existing organizations such as the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners, and Fire Prevention Canada to offer NFPA services.




Sean Tracey, the new Canadian Regional Manager for the National Fire Protection Association International

"Canadians are leading in the public education field," says Tracey, pointing to success with the *Learn Not to Burn* and *Risk Watch* programs. NFPA is also a leader in the field of standards and fire protection. Since the Canadian office has opened, Tracey has fielded many inquiries including calls from the petroleum industry in Alberta. Answers to some questions on standards are found only in NFPA documentation.

Tracey says there are only small differences between the Canadian and American NFPA programs. "There's always room for improvement, but from my view of things, Canadians, particularly in Alberta, are taking the lead in some of these fire prevention initiatives and activities." He adds, "What I would like to do is to take some of those successes and share them with the other provinces. We're also talking to the NFPA about trying to communicate some of these lessons to U.S. stakeholders too."

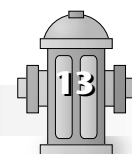
One of the big issues Tracey will face in his new position is the introduction of "objective-based codes." The Canadian Building

"... from my view of things, Canadians, particularly in Alberta, are taking the lead in some of these fire prevention initiatives and activities."

and Fire Codes are going to change by 2003. There is an immediate need to train building fire officials on how to use objective-based codes which will see a move away from current prescriptive-type codes and allow builders to take advantage of new technology and materials that will reduce building costs and potentially improve fire and life safety. This change to objective-based codes led by the National Research Council opens a new realm of possibilities and with that is the need to train building and fire officials in how to properly apply objective-based codes. 

For information on NFPA programs, training, or standards contact:

Sean Tracey
Canadian Regional Manager for NFPA International
110 Place D'Orleans, P.O. Box 49030
Orleans, ON K1C 7E4
Telephone: (613) 830-9102 Fax: (613) 841-1929
Email: stracey@nfpa.org



Redwater's young firefighters—making the grade

Andy Makowsky, Chief of the Redwater Fire Department, describes the students in the department's Junior Firefighters Program as "junior in age, but not in service."

The program is a partnership with the Redwater High School. Since the program started in 1981, 104 students have participated. Six of these students have gone on to professional careers in firefighting and emergency services.

Redwater students aged 16 and older are eligible to participate, with a parent's permission. The fire department provides feedback to the school on how the students are doing in the program. Some students join the Junior Firefighter Program to gain work experience credits toward their high school diploma. Others do not need the credits and join simply because they want the experience.



Redwater firefighters and junior firefighters involved in vehicle extrication training.

Recruitment

In September of each year, Makowsky and other volunteer firefighters visit the local high school and begin recruiting. They, along with a current Grade 12 junior firefighter, give a presentation and show a video to the Grade 11 students. Topics covered include fire prevention and suppression, emergency extrication from motor vehicles, and employment opportunities within the fire and emergency services industry.

They speak about the roles and expectations of individuals who volunteer for the department stressing commitment to public service. Volunteers are the lifeblood of most small-town and rural fire

departments. Makowsky, a volunteer himself, is pleased with the number of Redwater citizens, both junior firefighters and adults who volunteer for this vital task.

Training

Once the students have been accepted into the program, they go through a three-month probation period. Then the junior firefighters are integrated into regular training.

The young recruits train for grass and forest fires and then move on to vehicle fires and extrication. The final stage of training is structural firefighting.

The department usually has one two-hour training session per week. There are a total of 44 of these two-hour sessions available; junior firefighters can participate in some or all of them. Longer sessions, covering such topics as vehicle extrication, run from four to eight hours and are done on the weekends. "We all take turns in the training of all the personnel, especially the juniors," says Makowsky.

Eventually these young firefighters will go on every call the department receives. This is a big plus to the department. It means there are extra personnel on duty between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. when other volunteers are typically at work and may not be able to respond. It also gives the department much-needed additional workers for large forest or grass fires.

The length of volunteer tenure varies with each student, depending on the interest and school demands. One junior firefighter accrued 250 volunteer hours in two years.



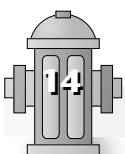
Redwater firefighters and junior firefighters overhaul a grass and structure fire April 27. (In the foreground left to right: Steve Yent, junior firefighter and Derek Marsh, former junior firefighter and now firefighter)

Benefits of the program

Makowsky highly recommends that other fire departments get involved in junior firefighter programs. Fire departments interested in pursuing this type of partnership should be familiar with workplace laws and regulations. Alberta Employment Standards and Workers' Compensation Board regulations apply to all junior firefighter participants. There are some restrictions as to hours of work and supervision.

The program is a win-win situation—the student gains knowledge and work experience and the regular volunteers receive assistance when they need it. Not only that, the community as a whole benefits from having responsible young citizens in their midst, and by living in a safe, well-protected area.

In the future, Makowsky would like to see more of the junior firefighters pursue a career in the fire service. But for now he is happy to see the students learning and developing under his leadership. "You give them a little bit of responsibility and you let them exercise it." 🔥



Mutual aid—things to consider

In most crisis situations, municipal fire departments have the personnel and equipment necessary to handle an emergency. But they may also have risk factors in their communities—tornado threats, buildings that pose evacuation challenges or flammable liquid storage facilities—that could overwhelm even the most well-trained and well-equipped department.



Tom Makey,
Fire Commissioner

In cases such as grass fires in southern Alberta, often the sheer area of the fire is so extensive that it's impossible for a single fire department to control or suppress the disaster. Several farm or industrial complexes under simultaneous threat, could also overwhelm one fire department. And, motor vehicle crashes can present a challenge to emergency efforts when vehicle extrication, traffic control and water tanker support are all needed at once. Multiple calls at the same time are also a serious challenge.

Specialized firefighting equipment and apparatus are expensive. Fire departments in smaller communities may be unable to free up funds to purchase every piece of emergency equipment necessary to handle a diverse range of situations. Most fire departments are faced with a limited roster of volunteers and in crisis situations, extra personnel and equipment are needed.

"That is when it's advisable to plan ahead and know whether or not help will be available when you need it and what kind of help you can expect to get," says Tom Makey, Fire Commissioner. Makey urges fire departments to estimate the cost of assistance—what a department will provide and what may be needed—and

outline alternate forms or sources of assistance as back-up.

The legal implications of emergency response actions must also be considered by fire departments. Municipal councils set policy for fire protection service levels within their area and establish jurisdiction for fire departments. A council may decide a fire department must stay within its boundaries because the department does not have the personnel or apparatus to provide protection at home and assist other areas as well.

Conversely, a council may recognize some advantages in making a formal agreement with neighbouring municipalities to help each other in times of emergency. "Especially during major emergencies such as forest or grass fires and tornadoes or floods," says Makey.

What goes into an agreement?

Makey advises that councils and fire departments include a start date and an "escape clause" in their mutual aid agreements. Such a clause would let them out of the agreement when an emergency at home requires all the department's resources.


Councils and fire departments must also determine who can access the help—a fire chief, officer in command, or other designated person. Preferably the request for aid is made by the fire department needing assistance and goes directly to the fire department indicated in the agreement. This avoids trying to get crucial last-minute decisions from the mayor or reeve.

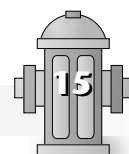
Mutual aid agreements should also indicate if there are certain emergencies serious enough to call for immediate help rather than waiting until local resources are exhausted. Perhaps the agreement may dictate that a particular partner will always be called in emergency situations because of a certain capability, for example a tanker, special rescue vehicle or aerial equipment.

Informal agreements to support other departments in emergencies become formal mutual aid agreements when all participating municipalities agree to the terms outlined and sign off the agreement. The mutual aid agreement suggests that there will be assistance flowing both ways or several ways depending upon how many parties are involved. (Contract emergency response is different because there is generally only a financial consideration for the service rather than an exchange of services.)

Some agreements are made between municipalities—urban or rural—or between municipalities and private industry that may include industrial brigades or firefighting cooperatives or associations. In essence, the agreement is between the entities that have a right to officially make and sign agreements or contracts.

"It is not uncommon for rural municipalities to have contractual arrangements with some of the towns or villages within their boundaries to provide emergency response services and also have mutual aid agreements between rural municipalities and urban municipalities," said Makey. He adds this is often the case when a rural municipality operates one or more fire departments in hamlets. It would be common for one rural municipality to have a mutual aid agreement with one or more other rural municipalities with which they share boundaries. A fire department may also have contracts with some of those areas depending upon circumstances and need.

Factors involved in mutual aid agreements may change—fire departments may be developed or dissolved, and personnel, equipment or apparatus levels may diminish. Like other agreements, they should be regularly reviewed to ensure the provisions are still appropriate and meet the needs of the parties involved. Says Makey, "A mutual aid agreement can help determine a positive outcome when emergency response challenges arise." 



Common fire code questions answered

Q. I own a small trucking company and have been given the opportunity to purchase a used above-ground storage tank (5000 litres) to take advantage of buying bulk gasoline at a reduced rate. Are there any regulations regarding above-ground storage tanks?

A. The installation of above-ground tanks for the storage of flammable and combustible liquids is regulated under the Alberta Fire Code 1997. These regulations ensure that the tank is located appropriately; constructed to applicable standards; and provided with some form of secondary containment in the event of a leak, spill or overflow. The installation must also be approved by the fire authority having jurisdiction. Tanks must be refurbished in a qualified shop prior to re-use and, once installed, must be registered with the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta.

Q. On a number of occasions I have seen boxes of fireworks for sale in my local store or gas station. Are there any restrictions on the purchase and display of these “family fireworks”?

A. No person shall purchase, possess, handle, discharge, fire, or set off fireworks unless they hold a permit for that purpose issued by the authority having jurisdiction. All fireworks are restricted under the Alberta Fire Code. The restrictions are designed to ensure that all aspects of fireworks purchase and discharge are undertaken in an organized manner. A number of permits may be required, depending on where the fireworks are to be purchased, stored and set off. Check with your fire authority having jurisdiction regarding local restrictions.

Q. On a recent visit to the United States I saw firecrackers on sale at a roadside venue. Are there any restrictions on bringing firecrackers into Alberta?

A. In Alberta, no person shall have in his possession, sell, offer for sale, give away or otherwise distribute firecrackers. A number of serious incidents involving firecrackers led to a ban on these devices in 1972. In addition to the ban, individuals should be aware that some firecrackers are not manufactured to acceptable specifications and may pose a serious threat to individuals. People returning to Canada with firecrackers may also encounter problems with customs when crossing the border.

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 good operating condition. Some individuals have been known to take advantage of the lack of knowledge on this matter. Here are some things extinguisher owners should be aware of:

- Fire departments do not generally “authorize” individuals to go around checking and charging for extinguisher inspections—though individuals may say they have this authorization in order to obtain work.
- Three terms are used by the fire protection industry with regard to fire extinguishers:

Inspection – fire extinguishers should be inspected monthly. This inspection can be carried out by the extinguisher owner and is primarily to ensure 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, which should be done on an annual basis by a company certified to carry out this type of work. Maintenance is in-



Ray Cox, Edmonton & Ray Ligenza, Calgary

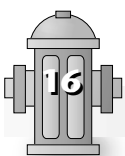
tended to give maximum assurance that an extinguisher will operate effectively and safely. It will also reveal the need for hydrostatic testing. *Recharging* – this involves replacing the extinguishing agent and can also include replacing the expelling agent. Fire extinguishers must be recharged after use, even if only a small amount of agent is expelled. Those that have a visual gauge or test button should be recharged or replaced as indicated on the manufacturers’ instructions. The annual maintenance procedure will also determine the need for recharging.

Individuals involved in the extinguisher business must be qualified under the Alberta Fire Code. Their facilities are inspected by companies approved by Alberta Municipal Affairs. Mobile shops are also required to undergo inspection.

If you are uncertain about a fire extinguisher business, ask to see details of shop certification and qualifications. Further information can be obtained from the Fire Commissioner’s Office at (780) 427-8392 or Technical Services at (780) 427-8265. A list of approved extinguisher recharge companies is maintained at the above locations and companies can be verified. 🔥

These questions and answers were prepared by:

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Leduc County gives recruiting volunteers high priority

Recruiting volunteers is a critical function for many Alberta fire departments. Leduc County made this an important part of Joan Meidinger's job when it gave her the permanent position of Coordinator of Volunteer Services last July. Joan had previously worked with the County on contract, but her activities were considered so important that the contract turned into a full-time job. Now she is responsible for attracting volunteers to the Leduc County Parks and Recreation Department, as well as recruiting and coordinating volunteers for the fire department.

"Over the past 26 months, our volunteer program has been altered and evaluated," says Meidinger. "We identified problem areas, implemented changes, and evaluated those changes for success or failure. We will continue to do this—it's not a one-time shot."

Meidinger explains that an important element of the Leduc County department volunteer program is goal-setting—an essential tool for management—as well as having somebody solely responsible for the program. "Our current status is 34 volunteers and it's imperative that we maintain that." She adds, "Future demands on our service may change our needs. We need to be on top of that situation. The 34 volunteers we have today may not be enough 10 years down the road."

Meidinger has previous experience in volunteer recruitment and management for a local Edmonton zoo as well as a wildlife centre. She recognizes the uniqueness of the fire service volunteers, "The word volunteer doesn't always indicate how skilled and highly trained these people are and how much time they invest in the cause," she says.

When recruiting, Meidinger seeks enthusiastic males or females, 20 to 40 years of age, who are looking for a challenge. For her, the key attributes of a volunteer firefighter are those qualities that demonstrate stable ties to the community—someone who's dedicated, community-minded, and reliable.



Joan Meidinger, Coordinator Volunteer Services, Leduc County Fire Services

Meidinger sets high standards for volunteers and realizes that the perfect long-term volunteer is rare. "There are always going to be problems and issues when using volunteer firefighters within an emergency response delivery service. As a fire service we need to continually analyze the problems and come up with solutions," she says.

Volunteer firefighters are "high investment" volunteers who need a great deal of leadership. They are people who are willing to specialize their skills and commit a lot of time and, as such, are often difficult to find. "It's essential for us to maintain a quality volunteer program so

What makes a great volunteer firefighter?

Ideally, volunteer firefighters should have some mechanical background, a valid drivers licence with a satisfactory record, and an acceptable security clearance. They should be able to follow directions and be very detail-oriented. They must have no fear of heights or confined spaces.

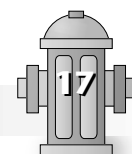
Meidinger also looks for a stable employment record and a high-school diploma. Volunteers are required to pass a written aptitude test and maintain a good level of physical fitness. They should also be willing to be on call 24 hours a day.

that these people stay," says Meidinger. "A fire department's greatest asset is its people and there has to be a balance between the needs of the organization and the volunteers."

Volunteer firefighters need ongoing training, skill development, motivation and quality gear and equipment. It is also essential that they be provided with clear policies and procedures including a well-defined job description and disciplinary action plan.

One of the first tasks Meidinger tackled was to promote and sell the fire department, building awareness in the community. Getting community buy-in takes continued effort and ongoing promotion. The department promotes itself by main-

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taining contact with firefighters' employers through a quarterly newsletter and recognizing employers annually with a special luncheon.

Meidinger also recognizes that the department needs the support of its volunteers' families. Events such as this May's "Show and Shine" car show are opportunities for members of the department and their families to become involved in reaching the community and provide a morale boost for volunteers. Other emergency and community service organizations were also involved in the event including police, Rural Crime Watch, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Associated Ambulance, Northern Alberta's Decontamination Units, and STARS Air Ambulance. Organizers were more than happy when over 300 people attended the event.

Prior to Meidinger's tenure, rookies were recruited during the month of February each year by running ads in local newspapers. Meidinger believes recruitment needs to be done year-round. "We need to address tomorrow's needs, not just today's."

In 1999 the department recruited 10 rookies. This year the department's one vacancy, due to retirement, was filled. That one vacancy was filled by a firefighter with training from the Alberta Fire Training School. "Our success story is that we have a waiting list of outstanding candidates. We don't have any vacancies. I've got these people waiting in the wings and I'm keeping in contact with them," she says.

The department is still striving to ensure that the needs and challenges of long-term volunteers are being met. "We're not saying that it's the best, but it is better and we're still learning." And re-learning. Meidinger makes an effort to keep pace with changes in department needs and maintains open communication within the department, which she describes as "a two-way street." 

Digest

House doubles as fire hall

A company called Homes By Avi and the City of Calgary are teaming up to build a "firehouse" in Hidden Valley. The exterior of the house will be similar to others in the neighbourhood, but inside, the house will contain the essential elements of a fire hall. The fire department will use the house for three to five years, until a permanent fire hall is constructed. The temporary fire hall is expected to reduce response times substantially. Builders are looking to complete the project in 2001.

Fire hall food impresses fire chief for a day

Calder elementary Grade 5 student Vinson Hua won the honour of becoming fire chief for a day during Fire Prevention Week when his fire escape plan was drawn during Edmonton's annual contest. He said he liked the food best during his day of learning firsthand about the role of firefighters. He also liked being able to miss school.

Who's new?

Mitch Carson is now fire chief for the City of Wetaskiwin. He was previously fire chief for the County of Red Deer.

Jim Pendergast is the Red Deer Fire Department's new deputy chief of prevention and education. Pendergast left his job as deputy chief of the Grande Prairie Fire Department for his new role in Red Deer.

Memorial dedicated

The Firefighters Memorial Plaza in Edmonton was officially dedicated at a ceremony on October 13, 2000, during the last days of Fire Prevention Week. The memorial was sponsored by the Edmonton Firefighters Memorial Society to honour the eight firefighters who have died in the line of duty since 1892. Society chairman Ed Rostalski says he's hoping the last Friday of Fire Prevention Week will be used to remember fallen firefighters and other members who have passed on in the previous year. The memorial is located in Old Strathcona at 10318-83 Ave.

Grants for training fire and disaster services personnel

When Alberta Municipal Affairs Minister Walter Paszkowski toured the province, municipal officials told him they needed help in providing training for fire and disaster services personnel. As a result, additional funds were made available to the Municipal 2000 Sponsorship Program for this purpose. Here's how the money was distributed:

Fire portion

Fire protection master planning training (115 municipalities): \$620,500
Training materials: \$386,087
Equipment: \$27,483
Alberta Fire Training School (Safety Codes Officer Training): \$100,000

Disaster portion

Disaster services training (42 municipalities): \$355,572

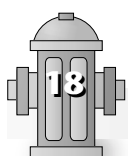
Holiday fire hazards "wrapped up!"

Holiday Hazards: Wrap Them Up! is the theme of this year's holiday fire safety campaign (December 15 to 31). Campaign kits were mailed to all fire departments in late November. The kit has also been distributed to the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association, Regional Health Authorities, and the Alberta Safe Community Network. A news release on the campaign is planned for early December. For fire safety tips for the festive season check out our web site at www.gov.ab.ca/ma.

Underground tank program announced

Financial help is available through a new program to assist municipalities and small businesses in cleaning up abandoned underground petroleum storage tank sites. The program, which is expected to cost \$80 million, will run from October 2000 until March 31, 2002. Environmental site assessments will be funded up to a maximum of \$10,000 per site. Remediation costs for municipalities and retail owners of single sites will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$100,000 per site. Small retail owners of multiple sites will be reimbursed according to a sliding scale based on the number of sites. For more information on this program contact Safety Services at (780) 415-8666.

Let us know of changes to management personnel in your fire services so we can tell others in Alberta's fire community.



Resources

Agrium

- 63 of the total 130 staff have specific emergency response duties
- hydrants with monitors in the area around the site and in the product storage area, mobile equipment, a command rescue truck that carries equipment for high-angle rescue, 1 pumper with an in-line foam eductor, and an emergency transport vehicle

Dow Chemical

- 12 full-time emergency response technicians and 70 other trained emergency responders who are members of the Alberta Pre-Hospital Professionals Association

Fort Saskatchewan Fire Service

- 45 volunteers
- 4 pumpers, a rescue unit, a mini-pumper, and a large command bus

Lamont Fire Department

- 36 volunteers with 11 trained in industrial firefighting
- three-bay fire hall, 2 pumpers, a rescue unit with extra breathing apparatus, and vehicle extrication equipment

Shell Products Canada and Shell Chemicals

- more than 70 trained front-line emergency response personnel, as well as 35 trained incident command personnel on pagers to staff the Emergency Operations Centre
- a “nurse truck” containing 3000 gallons of foam, 2 pumpers, a rescue/on-scene command unit and an emergency conveyance vehicle

Strathcona County Emergency Services

- 73 Paramedic and EMT/A full-time and 110 part-time staff
- 4 tankers, 4 brush trucks, 6 ambulances, 6 pumpers, and 5 fire halls

Sturgeon County Emergency Services

- 192 volunteers
- two county fire halls in Namao and Calahoo and five town partners in Bon Accord, Gibbons, Legal, Morinville and Redwater all providing services to both urban and rural residents

Imperial Oil, PetroCanada, Shell Canada Products, Shell Chemicals, Sherritt International, Strathcona Refinery, and TransMountain Pipeline.

“We’ve got world-class industry and we need a world-class response,” says Burton. A new fire hall on Highway 15 and Secondary Highway 830 should be finished in the first quarter of 2001. Shell is also completing an upgrader in the area in 2001 – 2002, which will employ 4,000 to 5,000 construction workers.

Fire could be devastating to this region, and Burton says the fire service is a big part of industry’s loss prevention and control program, not only during an incident, but in helping develop better safety codes by working with the plants. “We want to be there to share risk,” he says.

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line,” says Wall. He adds that reducing potential conflicts between industry and residents now and even 10 or more years from now is one of the goals of industry and its municipal firefighting partners.

Wall feels this type of planning provides incentive for businesses to locate in the Heartland. “The protection of people and property is foremost,” he says. “Very important is the type of support industry can garner from the municipal providers of emergency services,” he adds.

There to share the risk

Laird Burton is Fire Chief, Manager of Emergency Services, and Assistant Director of Disaster Services in Strathcona County, Alberta’s third largest municipality with a population of just over 69,000. He describes the relationship between emergency service providers and industry in Strathcona County as exceptional. “We think that’s one of the major strengths we offer to the region,” he says.



A model of the Heartland Emergency Services Hall scheduled for completion in April 2001. Full-time firefighters and advanced life-support staff will be on duty here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This roughly 650 square metre building will also contain Heartland offices and Northern Contact Strathcona offices. The building will be located at the intersection of Highway 15 and Secondary Highway 830.

Most of the heavy industry in the area is within Strathcona County, though some is shared with neighbouring cities and counties. The list of companies located in the Heartland is impressive. The major players include: Alberta Energy Company, Alberta Envirofuels, Alchem Chemical, Alta Steel, Agrium, CXY Chemicals, Dow Chemical Canada Inc., Enbridge,

Heartland partners in action

One example of a partnership between industry and the fire service occurred in the County of Sturgeon last spring when a fire broke out along railway tracks, caused by a passing train. The fire spread over 25 square kilometres and took every single firefighter and piece of equipment available in the department to fight it.

Afterward, Bart Clark, Sturgeon County’s Manager of Emergency Services, met with representatives from Railink, who have since manufactured a firefighting “track patrol unit” to combat fires along railroad tracks. The company trained its personnel to use extinguishers and pumps and built a firefighting foam unit mounted on a flat-deck rail-car. Then Railink identified high-risk fire areas, so when trains come through them, the track patrol unit can follow behind extinguishing any fires that are sparked. “We really appreciate their initiative,” says Clark.

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Other firefighting partners are also there to share the risk in the Heartland. Here's what some of them had to say about their involvement in the Heartland's emergency response partnership:

Bart Clark, Manager of Emergency Services in Sturgeon County: "We have an extremely beneficial relationship with our industrial partners. They'll come out no questions asked and vice versa."

Martin de Bruyn, Fire Services Chief, Fort Saskatchewan: de Bruyn describes his department's working relationship with industry partners Dow Chemical, Sherritt International and Agrium as excellent. Many of the department's volunteers are also employed with these companies.

on site and some things we can't. We choose not to burn hydrocarbons because the environmental impact is too great."

Mike Fedunec, Environment Health and Safety Management Systems, Agrium: Fedunec is positive about his company's relationship with the Fort Saskatchewan Fire Department. "They're a back-up to our site responders."



Lamont Fire Department practising on a pressurized liquid petroleum gas fire at the Shell training grounds in June.

Partnership grew over time

Collaboration was not a common thing when Bob Gerow, Manager of Risk Assessment at Sherritt International started working at Sherritt in 1989. "What you tended to see was each company with its own team and its own fire hall—almost to the point of these being jealously guarded. There were mutual aid groups, but it always seemed that there was a line that they would never cross in joint training, exercises, or collaboration of any kind."

Gerow says things have changed. "Today you're seeing discussions and agreements where teams are being integrated and equipment is being shared. What we've done is erased the boundaries within the municipality and the company."

Bob Gerow, Manager of Risk Assessment at Sherritt International: "Players in the community need to interact at all levels." Public works, Fort Saskatchewan's City Council and mayor, and a safety group on the plant site must have strong, ongoing communication with the city's protective services. "Without this communication you hand-cuff the effectiveness of anything you put on the ground in an incident."

Dale Anger, Emergency Services Technical Advisor, Dow Chemical: Dow spends a lot of time training staff in emergency response techniques both on and off the plant site. "Because of environmental concerns, there are some things we can do

John Helton, Fire Chief, Town of Lamont Fire Department, and Operations Coordinator, Shell Canada Products Ltd., Scotford: Shell is supportive of the fire department. "We use the Shell fire training grounds each year. We cover the operation of fire extinguishers, pressurized liquid fires (propane) and we also cover gasoline and diesel fuel fires."

Randy Attwell, Fire Safety and Emergency Response Advisor, Shell Canada Products Ltd.: Attwell describes Shell's relationship with Strathcona County's Emergency Services as a tremendous partnership. He says that the new fire hall being constructed near the complex is going to allow emergency response personnel at the plants and Strathcona County Emergency Services Department a greater opportunity to train together.

There's no doubt that it takes a lot of work to coordinate emergency response activities in the Heartland, but all partners agree that it's worth the effort. Says Gerow, if major industry can reduce risk in the community, there will be a change in community attitude toward industry. "It's a shared thing." 

