



Alberta

FIRE NEWS

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Congratulations Alberta!

Alberta's team has won the 2003 Risk Watch Champion Award, which provides winners with training to introduce the Risk Watch program in local communities. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) flew the team to the U.S. in March to receive intensive training on Risk Watch.

Members of the Champion Management Team include:

- Dave McKenna, EMT/Lt. Grande Cache Emergency Medical Services and Fire Department (Team Leader)
- Ken McMullen, fire prevention officer, MD of Rocky View
- Ken Fuhrmann, RCMP constable, Strathcona County
- Jan De Leeuw, principal, Dunluce Elementary School, Edmonton

Tim Vandenbrink, a member of the Edmonton Emergency Response Department and NFPA Representative for Western Canada, serves as the team's mentor.

"This is a tremendous honour and opportunity," said Dave McKenna, team leader for the Alberta Risk Watch Champion Management Team. "My hat goes off to everyone who supported us in establishing an effective networking committee and especially to those organizations that wrote letters of support."

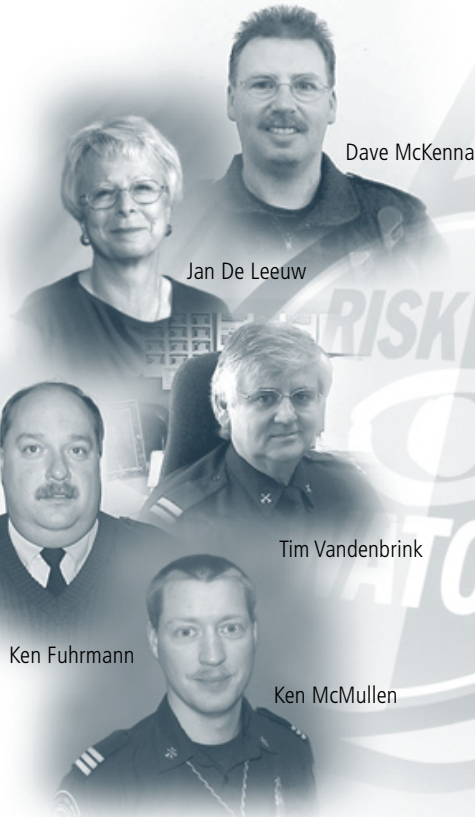
The Champion Award focuses on the development of a coordinated, multi-agency coalition to support the introduction and expansion of Risk Watch in local communities over a two-year

period. Criteria for the successful application required a one-page biographical sketch of each of the four team members, letters of support from several organizations, the names of five communities that have secured school system support to participate in the first-year implementation of Risk Watch in the province, and a one page essay on why Alberta should be selected to receive an NFPA Champion Award.

Letters of support came from many organizations across Alberta, including:

- Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
- Alberta Fire Chiefs Association
- Rocky View Fire Services
- Grande Cache RCMP
- Town of Grande Cache
- Strathcona County RCMP
- Alberta Learning
- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Grande Yellowhead Regional District #35
- City of Lethbridge
- Edmonton Emergency Response Department
- Lakeland Safety First Association
- Fort Saskatchewan Fire Department 

See page 6 for an update on the work of Alberta's Risk Watch Implementation Network.



Dave McKenna

Jan De Leeuw

Tim Vandenbrink

Ken Fuhrmann

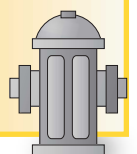
Ken McMullen

Congratulations to team members and a sincere thank you to all supporting organizations!

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Alberta
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS



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


In previous issues we told you about some of the changes taking place at the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). Here's the latest on FCO changes geared to improving service for Alberta's fire community.

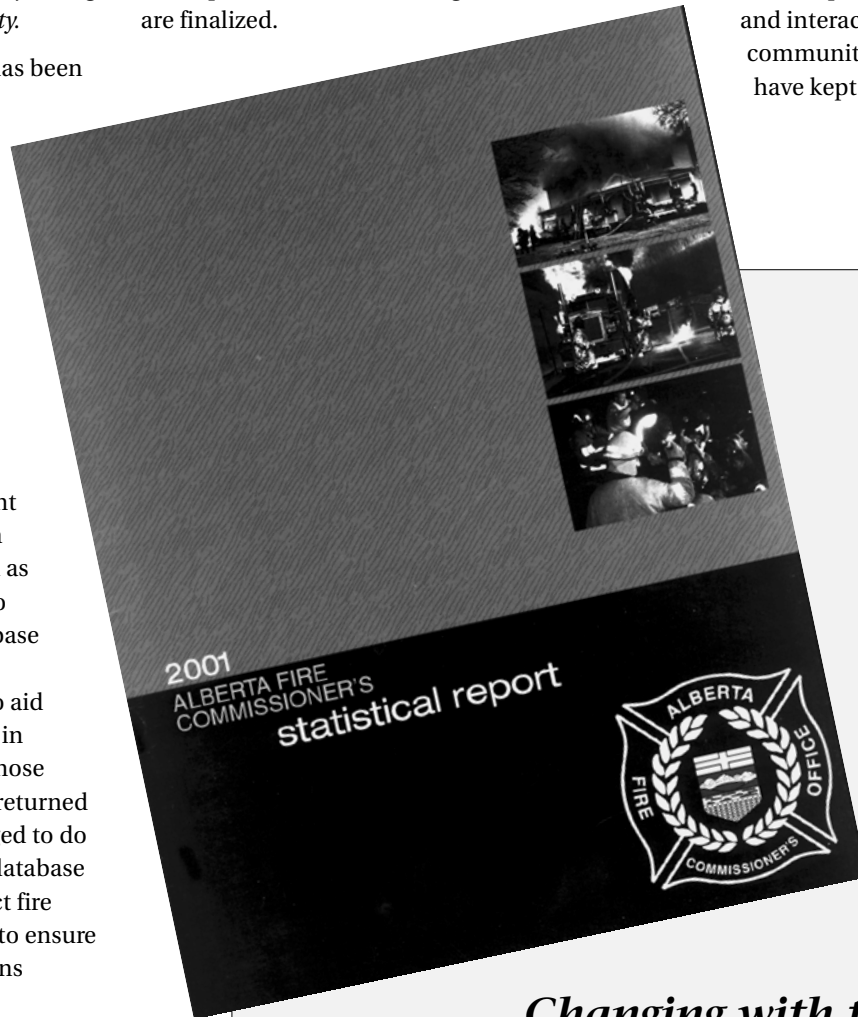
The Fire Commissioner's Office has been busy working on a number of initiatives to celebrate, streamline and assist the tremendous efforts of fire department personnel across the province. One of those initiatives is development of a database, called the Emergency Resources Inventory. To date, surveys have been distributed to all municipalities. The database inventory will capture resources available for disaster management and mutual aid planning on both provincial and local levels as well as coordinate specialized services to the needs of end users. The database will also serve as a comparative analysis tool for municipalities to aid in determining where they stand in relation to other communities. Those municipalities who have not yet returned a completed survey are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. After the database is developed, the FCO will contact fire departments on an annual basis to ensure that the data in the system remains current.

The Emergency Services Medal, which was proclaimed in December 2002, is available to any firefighter, ambulance responder, search and rescue, forestry officer, disaster services and EMA personnel or fire/emergency medical services (EMS) dispatcher who has served Alberta a minimum of 12 years.

The FCO is planning to offer two workshops on Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Training in conjunction with the Clark

Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto and the Ontario Fire Marshall's Office. Workshop information will be made available to fire departments when the logistics are finalized.

These initiatives, plus the continued services provided by the FCO such as statistical analysis, fire and injury prevention campaigns, and dialogue and interaction with fire communities across Alberta have kept office staff busy. 



Changing with the times

Another step in the transformation of the Fire Commissioner's Office is a new direction for the Annual Statistical Report. Starting with the 2001 edition, the report has been totally revamped to provide an overview of significant fire statistics in an easy-to-read format.

An appealing cover and graphically-enhanced inside pages include photos, pie charts, bar graphs and tables. For those who still want the more detailed statistical information provided in previous annual reports, you can obtain that information through the Fire Commissioner's Office web site at www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco.

Copies of the 2001 Annual Statistical Report have been mailed to fire departments across Alberta, and copies are available for downloading from the web site or by calling the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392.



Putting the spotlight on fire safety officers

Continuing with our profile on the transfer of six staff from the Safety Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs to the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), this issue we feature the two fire safety officers that serve the southern part of the province, Kevan Jess and George Hands. However, by the time you read this article, George will have already retired from his position and the Government of Alberta.

Kevan Jess

Prior to joining Alberta Labour in October 1990 as a Fire Services Advisor, Kevan Jess was the Director of Recreation for the Westlock Regional Recreation Board. That experience plus his progression (starting in 1982) from firefighter to captain to training officer and then assistant fire chief with the Westlock Fire Department provided him with the diverse skills necessary to do his job well, says Kevan. "There are actually many similarities between my position as a fire safety officer and my former position as the Director of Recreation. Both deal with community development and working with people to solve problems or issues. However, the technical focus is obviously very different."

Kevan says what's most rewarding about being a fire safety officer is being able to assist local communities when they have problems or concerns. "Many of the

people I interact with are volunteer firefighters and they look to our office for guidance or assistance. I understand that. As a volunteer confronted with a major incident, you can feel very, very alone as well as overwhelmed by the incident and all the opinions others may provide. The fire departments in southern Alberta have always been encouraged to call me at any time to get advice and any assistance we can provide, or possibly just some reassurance from a second opinion that they have covered all the bases."

His geographic area of responsibility includes southern Alberta from border to



border and everything south of the north boundary of the M.D. of Ranchlands, the M.D. of Willow Creek, the County of Vulcan, the County of Newell and Cypress County. While Kevan admits that it is a large territory to cover, he says he's usually within two hours of home at any given

time. "The travel time is a lot less than the commute I used to make from Lethbridge to Westlock when I first joined the provincial government," said Kevan.

There are 65 fire departments in Kevan's jurisdiction and he estimates that there are somewhere between 1,300 and 1,500 firefighters in southern Alberta. "Everyone is trying to do something to help their community, and I like that I

can deal directly with these people, working with them on their problems or situations," said Kevan. "What's most rewarding is the level of growth that's occurred over the past 12 years in the training, ability and confidence of our firefighters. A bright spot for the future is the interest among both fire departments and teachers in implementing the *Risk Watch* program in area schools."

George Hands

George Hands has had a very long and interesting history of the work-related service with the federal, municipal and provincial governments. Starting in 1958, he served as a police constable with both the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Metropolitan Toronto



Police Department and he worked in the fire service in Prince George, British Columbia as a volunteer firefighter/investigator, and in the Etobicoke Fire Department for 10 years in Toronto before moving to Alberta and joining the Fire Commissioner's Office in 1974 as a fire investigator.

In addition to his vast experience, George also has considerable related education, including a diploma in fire science-fire protection technology from the Ontario Fire College, a diploma in law enforcement in federal legislation, and certification in provincial, and municipal policing from the Metropolitan Toronto

Police College.

In his position as fire safety officer with the Fire Commissioner's Office, George put his skills and experience to good use helping fire departments deal with a diverse range of issues. He also lectured and instructed in fire cause and origin to

fire department personnel, insurance and industrial officials, municipal police services, the RCMP and students at the Alberta Fire Training School, the Canadian Fire Investigation School and for the Canadian Association of Fire Investigators. As well, he was involved in over 1,000 fire investigations and was declared an expert witness over 100 times.

Now into his 29th year with the provincial government, and nearly a total of 40 years in the fire service, George decided to start a new chapter in his life. March 31, 2003 was his last day as a Government of Alberta employee. As George said, "I've seen a lot of changes, but I always found the job very interesting." Work is under way to fill George's position. 🔥



New program helps municipalities pay for wildfires

The Alberta government has launched the Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program to help municipal governments deal with the cost of fighting wildfires. It is a joint initiative between Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development that will limit the financial burden on local taxpayers when wildfires must be battled in their communities.

The program is designed so that municipalities pay a base firefighting cost of \$25 per resident, and then the Alberta Government covers 75 per cent of the remaining firefighting costs (see eligibility and conditions below).


“We’ve recognized a need in Alberta’s municipalities and moved to address that need,” said Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier. “Up to now, we’ve provided compensation for emergency operations costs such as the cost of evacuations. This new program will allow us to go even further to help with the cost of fighting wildfires.”

The program applies to municipalities outside of the Forest Protection Area (see map on next page). If requested, Sustainable Resource Development may provide personnel and equipment to assist in battling wildfires.

“It’s very critical that we attack these fires early. When we reduce the financial burden, municipalities will be more likely to call us before a fire gets out of control,” said Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. “By taking early action, everyone should be able to save money in the long run.”

Under the program, municipalities will have more incentive to put effective and efficient wildfire management practices in place. There will be a five-year implementation period for municipalities to develop a wildfire awareness program, provide

adequate training and equipment for their firefighting staff, and develop fire control agreements and plans with Sustainable Resource Development.

The cost of the program will vary depending on the severity of the fire season. Claims for reimbursement for fighting wildfires on or after April 1, 2003 are eligible for consideration. Municipalities can contact Municipal Affairs at (780) 422-9000 for program guidelines and application procedures. Call 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton. 



For more information on the program, visit Municipal Affairs’ web site at www.gov.ab.ca/ma. Visit Sustainable Resource Development’s web site at www.gov.ab.ca/srd for more information on preventing and suppressing wildfire.

Eligibility and conditions

Any municipality that pays the cost of fighting wildfire in its community on or after April 1, 2003, is eligible to apply with the following conditions:

- The fire must be a wildland fire outside the Forest Protection Area, defined as an unwanted or unplanned fire that burns in forested, grassland or other vegetative areas.
- To reduce the spread of fire, the municipality must contact Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) as early as possible if it requires firefighting assistance.
- The municipality must provide Municipal Affairs with accurate records summarizing its costs on a timely basis.
- The municipality’s cost must exceed the base cost of \$25 per resident.
- Within five years, the municipality is also expected to:
 - establish mutual aid agreements with neighbouring municipalities, industrial fire departments and SRD,
 - include SRD in its municipal emergency planning process,
 - implement a fire permit program according to SRD guidelines,
 - establish a wildfire awareness program that encourages residents to protect their homes and property from wildfire,
 - train fire personnel in wildfire management, and
 - establish an infrared scanning program for detecting and following up on winter hold-over burning.



Protecting Alberta's forests

The 2003 fire season started April 1, 2003 activating Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's fire suppression operations. Fire permits are required for all burning activities within the Forest Protection Area and may be obtained from local Forest Protection Division offices of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.


Looking back to 2002



Due to the high hazard levels last year, the 2002 fire season officially started one month earlier (March 1) for the third consecutive year. Last May, the House River fire north of Lac La Biche consumed over 238,000 hectares of public land. It was Alberta's second largest wildfire since 1961.

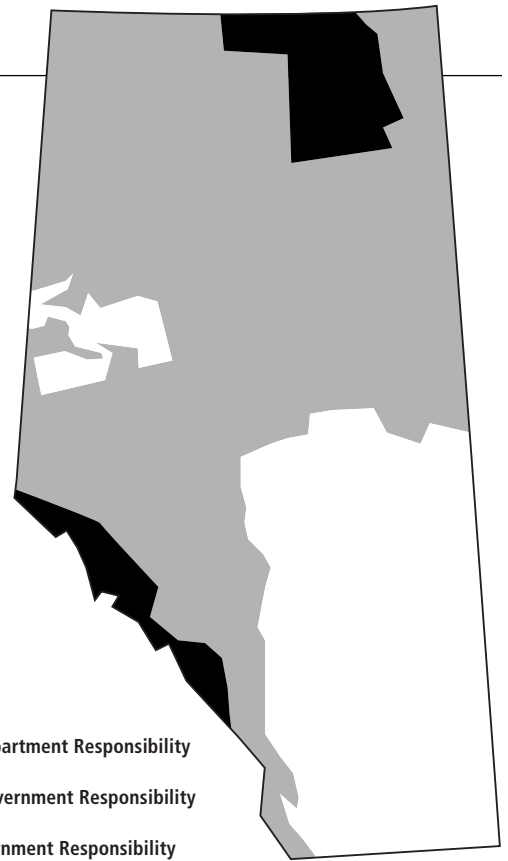
Throughout last year's fire season, Alberta imported over 1,400 personnel from out-of-province to assist in battling the large number of wildfires. In total, over 1,440 wildfires burned across Alberta destroying nearly 500,000 hectares (1.2 million acres) of land.

People cause 40 per cent of wildfires in the Forest Protection Area. These fires start in many ways including careless disposal of cigarettes, unattended campfires, industry activity and brushpiles. Members of the public are asked to call the new toll-free emergency hotline **310-FIRE** (3473) any time they see smoke or fire in the forest.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development continues to be a lead player in giving homeowners and municipalities detailed advice on how to reduce the risk of loss and enhance safety in the wildland-urban interface through FireSmart.

The FireSmart Program has been enhanced to provide Albertans with the knowledge to protect themselves, their property and our forests from wildfire. Strong program leadership is provided to help municipalities in the forested area with improved techniques that reduce the threat of wildfires. 

-  Local Fire Department Responsibility
-  Provincial Government Responsibility
-  Federal Government Responsibility (National Parks)



More information on fire prevention, detection and suppression can be found on Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's web site:
<http://envweb.env.gov.ab.ca/env/forests/fpd>

Two upcoming campaigns

Campaigning for fire safety in Alberta

Two fire safety campaigns to keep in mind—Summer Fire Safety and Fire Prevention Week 2003.

Summer Fire Safety Campaign

With the promise of warmer weather, it's worth mentioning the Summer Fire Safety Campaign. Based on an analysis by the Fire Commissioner's Office of fire-loss data during the spring and summer months, the campaign is designed to inform the public about fire hazards during these periods.

Fire Prevention Week 2003


It's not too early to start planning for this annual campaign, which takes place October 5-11, 2003. This year's theme is "When Fire Strikes, Get Out! Stay Out!"



Kaylen Jensen, winner of the 2002 Fire Prevention Week contest, sits on top of the box holding his new Compaq computer.

Gathered with him are Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner, Ernie Polsom, Assistant Fire Commissioner, Pat Graham, Fire Commissioner, and Kevan Jess, Fire Safety Officer, Lethbridge Regional Office.

The Fire Commissioner's Office is busy working on the campaign kit material, which will be distributed to fire departments across Alberta. All fire departments are strongly encouraged to work with schools in their communities to get students to participate in the activities.

The 2003 McDonald's fire prevention week campaign activity booklets are currently being planned, with guidance from a team of provincial representatives from Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia. 

Both campaigns will be posted on the Fire Commissioner's web site: www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco. For further information, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner, at (780) 427-8392.



Update on Risk Watch Implementation Network activities

Meeting on a regular basis, usually through teleconference, the Alberta Risk Watch Implementation Network Committee has enabled *Risk Watch* practitioners across the province to keep in touch, network and share ideas. One of the most significant achievements for the network was the awarding of a *Risk Watch* Champion award for Alberta (see front page).

Additionally, there is a wealth of information about the *Risk Watch* program posted on the Fire Commissioner's Office web site (www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco). The web site contains links between *Risk Watch* and the learning outcomes of the Health & Life Skills Curriculum and other programs of study. In addition, it also includes updates

about *Risk Watch* in Alberta. As well, there are useful web links to other sites featuring, for example, the Health & Life Skills Curriculum Guide to Implementation and resources to promote the program.

The first order of business at the most recent teleconference meeting, held on March 7, 2003, was extending congratulations to the *Risk Watch* Champion Team. The committee then heard an update on the linkage of *Risk Watch* to the Programs of Studies & Best Practices Manual by Angie Peters of the Grande Prairie & Area Safe Communities.



The team also discussed the Canadianization of *Risk Watch*, and acknowledged that the Fire Commissioner's Office is providing \$30,000 towards this initiative. Regional updates from *Risk Watch* practitioners across Alberta included the Lakeland Injury Control Project, the Kidsafe Connection, the Lethbridge Regional Health Authority and Lethbridge Safety City. 🔥

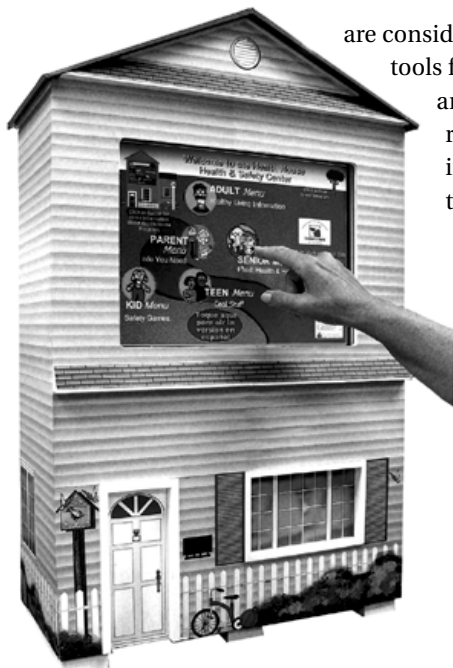
If you are interested in learning more about the *Risk Watch* program or joining the Risk Watch Network Implementation Committee, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner at (780) 427-8392.

Hazard Houses

Making an investment in education

The Fire Commissioner's Office recently purchased five Hazard House tabletop display units to assist fire departments in promoting fire and injury prevention.

The display units, which cost \$10,000 each, provide an interactive approach to teaching fire prevention and safety through programs such as *Risk Watch*. The units



are considered one of the best tools for teaching, learning and remembering risks and hazards inside and outside the home.

The units will be made available for borrowing by fire departments across Alberta to assist schools with the *Risk Watch* program and any other fire safety presentation. 🔥



For more information or to schedule use of one of the units, please contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392.



Fire department liability

The following is an excerpt from a paper on fire department liability written by Paul A. McDonnell. McDonnell is a lawyer with the firm Lindsay Kinney in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Many firefighters and municipal insurers believe that actions against fire departments are a relatively new phenomena. In reality, there are hundreds of reported decisions involving lawsuits against fire departments and currently there are more successful actions against fire departments than in the past.

Generally speaking, fire departments owe a duty of care to property owners to be careful to ensure that their fire suppression efforts protect the interests of the property owner and adjacent owners.

In considering the particular nature of a volunteer fire department, the court made the following comments: "A community which establishes a volunteer firefighting service does so because it recognizes the need to be able to respond quickly to situations which may threaten life and, secondarily, property. It is expected that volunteer firefighters will undertake activity that poses a risk. A volunteer firefighter is unpaid and is acting outside the normal area of work, training or experience; firefighting is not a sport and it does not bring with it the exhilaration of mountain climbing or parachute jumping. Firefighting is a dirty, dangerous activity, undertaken not when you feel like it or when weather permits, but when the alarm bell rings. The judge concluded that in his view the motivation to put oneself at risk derives primarily from the desire to

provide a measure of protection for the individuals in the community and that the expectation of the community is that those who volunteer for firefighting duty are willing to put themselves at risk to provide a degree of life and safety protection for the residents of the community. In sum, the undertaking of a volunteer firefighter is purely a public service rendered without expectation of remuneration or reward."

"...firefighting is not a sport and it does not bring with it the exhilaration of mountain climbing or parachute jumping."

The court also stated:

"The standard of care must be expressed in terms that make it appropriate to volunteer firefighters who have very little training, experience and are obliged to rely on imperfect equipment and a dubious water supply.


The standard of care may be influenced, at least to some extent, by such factors as training, equipment and resources available. Presumably, a community would expect a higher level of skill and a more consistent record of success from a very experienced, efficient and well-trained fire department, using the latest equipment, than it would of a fire depart-

ment with little experience, negligible training and minimal antiquated equipment. The standard of care must be one that recognizes the local situation and the particular firefighters in question."

Recent decisions have established that the courts will impose liability on fire departments if their response time is not within acceptable standards.

The evolution of fire department liability goes hand-in-hand with the overall decrease in government immunity and the expanding areas of municipal and professional liability. More and more, the courts have implemented the apportionment of liability to parties which, in the past, have been forgiven for their mistakes on the basis that the overall good which they offered to the community outweighed the detrimental result of

those individual errors.

Society as a whole has moved toward a less forgiving approach to negligence and the courts have reflected society's desire to apportion responsibility to those individuals or entities which have caused damage to others as a result of their negligence. 

Note: a complete copy of the report prepared by Mr. McDonnell is available at: www.lindsaykenney.bc.ca/fire/Articles/Fire%20Department%20Liability.htm



Using video as a fire investigation tool

In our continuing effort to expand the scope of articles in Alberta Fire News to include other aspects related to the fire service, the following article has been provided by Reed Leary with Leary Semeniuk Inc. Corporate Investigative Services of Edmonton, Alberta.

I would like to draw your attention to a very valuable piece of technology that is almost totally overlooked by fire investigators. Although the video camera has been with us for a couple of decades now, it is still a largely under-utilized investigative tool.

In any fire investigation, there are usually three distinct parts:

- Initial response by the fire department and police
- Scene examination by the origin and cause expert
- Follow-up interviewing by the insurance adjuster, a special investigation unit (S.I.U.) and/or the police.

I know that more and more fire departments are utilizing video upon arrival at the scene, but the use has rarely extended beyond the first response stage. Origin

and cause and S.I.U. people have yet to fully realize the value of video. Although there is still a place for snapshot pictures to accompany your report, it is time to include video as a standard investigation procedure.



The advantage of video is that it is quick and all-inclusive. Every wall of every room can be videotaped. And, while walking through the scene or showing how the fire progressed, investigators can explain what they see or think. For the courts or the insurance company, it is the next best thing to actually being there as it gives them a better appreciation of what you actually saw.

Many times follow-up investigations are conducted months or years after the incident, often by investigators unfamiliar with the original investigation. In these cases, a video report can quickly focus them on what happened and provide a solid understanding of what you discovered and the reasons for your interpretation. Video preserves the scene long after the damage has been repaired.

For an investigator interviewing witnesses or suspects, video is an ideal tool for re-enactments. Whenever possible, I have people re-enact what they claim happened. I have them go through the scene and point out where the fire started and where they were when they noticed the fire.

A video preserves evidence and makes you look more professional in the eyes of your client. It is also an excellent training and debriefing tool. You do not have to be an expert to use the camera and, as an added bonus, there are no processing costs or delays. Also, you don't need a really "high-end" unit — just the basics. Once you include a video camera in your investigation tool kit, I'm confident that you will quickly realize its benefits. 🔥

Queen's Golden Jubilee Medals

Receiving recognition

Three staff of the Fire Commissioner's Office were recently recognized for their dedication to fire protection in Alberta.

- **Mahendra Wijayasinghe,**
Assistant Fire Commissioner
- **George Hands,**
Fire Safety Officer, Calgary area
- **Ed Pomerleau,**
Fire Safety Officer, Edmonton area

All three were awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Commemorative Medal, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of Her Majesty's reign as Queen of Canada. The medal is awarded to Canadians who have made a significant contribution to their fellow citizens, their community or to Canada.

Alberta Fire News readers may recall that in the December 2002 issue we acknowledged Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham receiving the same medal. 🔥



What's up at fire etc.?

Provided below is a listing of some of the most recent initiatives and training opportunities through **fire etc.**, the former Alberta Fire Training School.

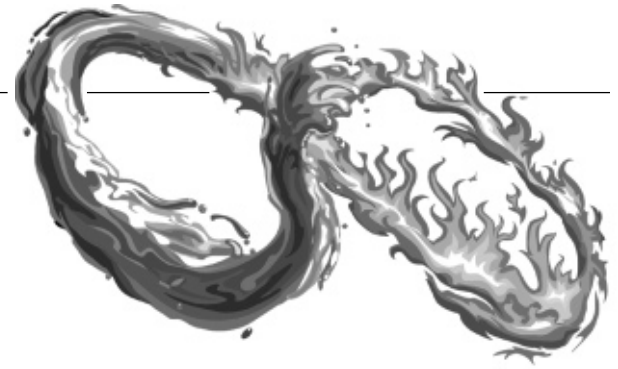
Medical screening process

With representation from industrial medical personnel and **fire etc.**'s client base, the **fire etc.** Wellness Advisory Committee has endorsed the need for a valid physical screening process. Over the next several months, **fire etc.** will be developing the details of the medical screening process, determining the best means of information sharing and consultation with client groups and planning the implementation strategy.

For more information or to become involved in the committee process, contact Chris Senaratne, Director, Quality Management and Accreditation, at (780) 581-2029.

Workplace health and safety focus

A new health and safety initiative underway promises to raise the bar for worksite safety programs in Alberta. **fire etc.** has developed the framework for a comprehensive training program for designated safety coordinators in any workplace setting. The program consists of 15 mostly one-day core modules as well as a choice of options for specific workplace needs. "It's going to be very leading-edge," said Karl Pedersen, a Canadian Registered Safety Professional. "Many components of the program don't currently exist in Alberta. The program's approach is behaviour based, with the intent of influencing corporate cultures to achieve greater priority on safety. It will also have particular relevance to the municipal fire service." The program is designed to be totally mobile for delivery at any location in the province.



fire etc.

Industrial entry level program

fire etc. has also launched a new one-week program designed to equip current and prospective industrial brigade members with the basic, essential skills and knowledge needed for appropriate response to a fire on the plant site.

As well, courses are scheduled for extinguisher and cylinder training and high pressure cylinder inspection. 🔥

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

Analysis of Alberta fire fatalities

Fire deaths down in 2002

It has been a tradition to provide a summary of fire losses in the province in the May issue of *Alberta Fire News*. However, with major changes in the Fire Statistics Information System at the Fire Commissioner's Office, the 2002 fire incident reports, except where fatalities occurred, are not yet completely entered into the data base. The short analysis below summarizes the fire fatalities in 2002.

A total of 28 fire deaths were recorded for 2002. This is a 33 per cent decrease from the 42 fire deaths in 2001. The fatalities were six females and 22 males. They can be further classified as:

- Children** (11 years and under) – 2 (both males)
- Youth** (12 - 17 years) – 2 (both males)
- Adults** (18 - 64 years) – 19 (4 females, 15 males)
- Seniors** (65+ years) – 5 (2 females, 3 males)

Property classes where deaths occurred are: One/two family dwellings (10); apartments (6); cars and general trucks (5); mobile homes (2); travel trailer (1); general business office (1); rooming/boarding/lodging house (1); outdoor property (1); and home for the aged (1).

Causes of death can be classified as: Smoking related (7); arson (4); automobile crash (4); candle (1); electric kettle igniting plastics (1); refrigerator igniting flammable gas (1); clothes dryer (1); ignition of gasoline (2); automobile fire (1); and unknown (6).

Fire deaths were located in: Edmonton (9); Calgary (5); Medicine Hat (1); St. Albert (1); Lethbridge (1); Innisfail (1); Stony Plain (3); Swan Hills (1); Sturgeon County (1); Kitscoty (1); Alberta Beach (1); Rocky View M.D. #44 (1); and First Nations Reserves (2). 🔥



Seeing is believing!

As reported in the Digest section of the December 2002 issue of *Alberta Fire News*, Alberta firefighters fared very well at the 7th World Firefighters Games in New Zealand. Dozens of firefighters from Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Calgary, St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc County and Stony Plain, along with family and friends, made the long trip “Down Under” to meet thousands of fellow firefighters and supporters from around the world. Called “The Memorial Games” in memory of the firefighters killed on September 11, 2001, the activities included the dedication of a beautiful memorial garden, which contained steel from the World Trade Center. The memorial garden is located

along the banks of the River Avon and was dedicated in the presence of 30 New York firefighters.

The games ran from October 26 to November 2, 2002. When the games were over, Canada finished a very respectable sixth after New Zealand, France, Australia, Hong Kong and England. Fort McMurray

firefighters brought home the most medals to Alberta, including Steve Eliason as the toughest firefighter alive, Joe Gauthier who won a gold medal in the firehouse cook-off and Brian Follett who won gold in slow pitch. As well, the husband/wife team of Dave Monilaws and Jan Garvey from Leduc County Fire Services returned with 10 medals between them.





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1. *The Canada White Team, gold medal winners for Softball—slowpitch.*
2. *Enthusiastic celebrating included a new hair-do for one Canadian delegate.*
3. *Jan Garvey, Leduc County Fire Department, participating in the competition. Jan and her husband Dave, who was part of the Canada White Team (Softball—slowpitch) brought home 10 medals between them.*
4. *Pieces of steel from Ground Zero at the World Trade Center create a memorial. Standing on the bridge directly behind the memorial are 30 firefighters from New York.*
5. *Parading of Canadian delegates*
6. *Some of the Canadian delegates at the World Firefighter Games.*
7. *Maoris blessing the site of the firefighter memorial as a sacred place.*
8. *Some of the Fort McMurray firefighters showing off a rugby jersey signed by the All Blacks Rugby Team, which was won by a wife of one of the firefighters.*



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EMA helps municipalities practise, practise, practise

Over the past few years, Alberta has seen a number of disasters, from tornados to train derailments to major floods and fires. Local police and fire departments are usually on the scene first, so they need to have the skills and training to handle any kind of emergency situation. Although no one looks forward to such an event, by practising their roles in simulation exercises, personnel are well equipped to deal with the situations.

Through Emergency Management Alberta (EMA), formerly know as Disaster Services, communities are able to put their emergency management skills to practise in mock exercises and simulation cells. According to Rick Brown, Director of Community Programs at EMA, planning is the key. "We work with communities across Alberta to ensure that, first, they have their emergency plans in place and then, secondly, to create realistic mock disaster exercises that enable key community officials to practise their roles," said Brown.

"One of the most critical factors in an emergency situation is excellent communication. We really stress the importance of communication in our mock exercises, so that everyone knows who's in charge of what and how to get and give information expediently," added Brown.

EMA has six district offices across the province to liaise with the 360 municipalities and 46 First Nation communities located throughout Alberta. Staff from these offices also have a strong link with the fire service in these communities. According to Brown, EMA district officials deal with the municipal Director of Disaster Services in each community, many of whom have a fire background.



Mike Craig (left) of the Lacombe Municipal Ambulance Service and Regional Fire Chief Fred Millar determine how their departments should handle a mock disaster last fall.

"Actually, fire personnel are usually one of the better positions to draw from for the position of Director of Disaster Services." EMA also liaises with the Fire Commissioner of Alberta on a regular basis.

"Firefighters play a critical role in any emergency response," said Ron Wolsey,

EMA at a glance

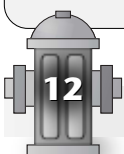
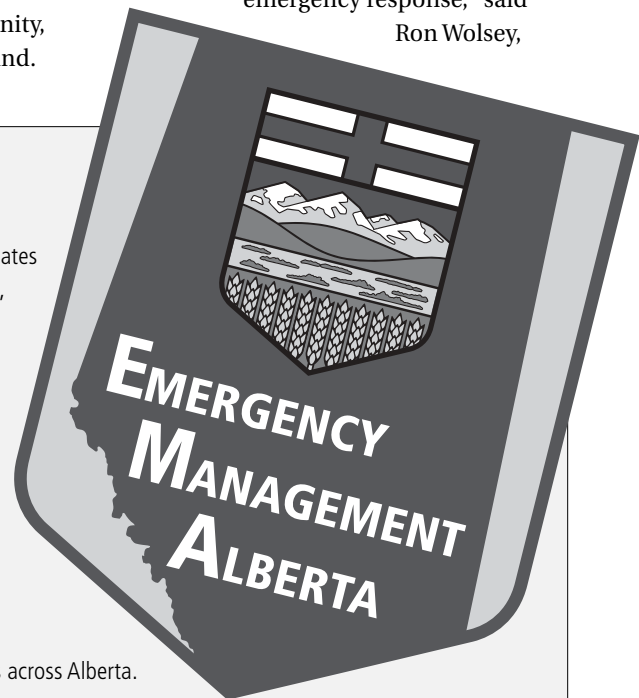
Emergency Management Alberta, a branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs, develops and coordinates an overall provincial program to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major emergencies, disasters and potential terrorist activities.

The branch is organized into the following six operational sections:

- Provincial Programs Unit
- Community Programs Unit
- Industrial Programs Unit
- Crisis Management Unit
- Business Resumption Planning Unit
- Training Programs Unit

Eight district offices provide regular liaison with municipalities and First Nations communities across Alberta.

For more information about EMA, its programs, services and district contacts as well as updates about weather or other potential emergency situations across Alberta, visit the EMA web site at: www.gov.ab.ca/ma/ds/index.cfm or call (780) 422-9000.



Executive Director of Emergency Management Alberta. "Fire departments are key players in emergency exercises and in responding to real-life emergencies."


Where possible, simulation exercises try to pull in as many resources as would likely be needed in the event of a real disaster.

For example, in a recent simulation event based on the scenario of a collision between a school bus and a truck carrying hazardous material, officials from several municipalities were included. "The training exercises are designed to be as

realistic as possible, so in addition to having an old school bus in the ditch, staff were also pulled together from the Town of Bonnyville, the M.D., the Town of Cold Lake and Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake. The end result was a very worthwhile endeavour," added Brown.

Another mock disaster saw the M.D. of Wainwright conduct a table-top exercise at their Communiplex in February 2003. About 50 people were involved in the exercise, including representatives from the M.D., Ambulance/911, Family and

Community Support Services, Wainwright Fire Department, the RCMP, Edgerton, Irma, Chauvin, the Town of Wainwright, the hospital and the media.

EMA policy stipulates that every municipality should exercise its emergency plans at least once every four years. Major municipalities often have enough real situations, but with other communities, the simulation exercises give them a real sense of what needs to be done if an emergency occurs in their community or one nearby. 

Children may not wake

Smoke alarms still important

The Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) is urging families to continue maintaining their smoke alarms and practising home fire escape plans so that all members of the household know how to respond to a fire.

Recent reports out of the United States have indicated that some children sleep so soundly that smoke alarms may not wake them. The FCO emphasizes that this does not change the fact that smoke alarms are critical, life-saving devices.



"The safety of all Albertans is our number one concern," said Municipal Affairs Minister Guy Boutilier, who is responsible for the FCO. "But this is an issue of personal responsibility. We are counting on parents to teach their children the sound of the smoke alarm and to be there to help them in the event of a fire."

Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) held a Standards Technical Panel meeting in early March to discuss the issue. As a result of the meeting, two working groups were established to gather information


and make proposals for future research to better understand the physiological and technical aspects of the issue. The groups will also develop educational campaigns to raise public awareness about smoke alarms and fire safety.

The Fire Commissioner's Office encourages families to follow these simple fire safety tips:

- Install at least one smoke alarm on every level of the home, including the basement. **Make sure there is an alarm in or near every sleeping area.** Follow manufacturers instructions on installation. To ensure they are in working condition, test smoke alarms once a

month and replace the batteries at least once a year. Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.

- Get together with everyone in the household and create a fire escape plan. Draw a floor plan showing two ways out of each room, including windows. Mark the location of each smoke alarm. **Practise the home fire escape plan at least twice a year, preferably at night.** If there are infants or family members with mobility limitations, make sure someone is assigned to assist them.
- Get everyone involved in a fire safety inspection by identifying and eliminating any home fire hazards as a family. This will reduce the chances of a fire in your home. Prevention is the most important element of firefighting!

"Smoke alarms don't prevent fires, fight fires or get people out of the house. But they do provide an early warning of smoke and fire danger," said Fire Commissioner Pat Graham. "If children are prone to sleep through the sound of the smoke alarm, it is the parent or caregiver's responsibility to ensure children are woken up and helped out of harm's way." 

For more information, please call the Fire Commissioner's Office at 780-427-8392 or call 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton.

This article is the third and final article in a series about fireplay and firesetting in children and teens. The first and second articles ran in the May and August 2002 editions.

Helping a juvenile firesetter—Michael's story

Michael¹, an 8 year-old-boy, was referred to TAPP-C (The Arson Prevention Program for Children, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) after a fire started in the living room of his apartment early one morning. His mother awoke to a smoke-filled bedroom and her son crying "fire." She grabbed Michael and his five-year-old sister and rushed from the apartment. From the neighbour's apartment, Michael's mother called 9-1-1. The fire department arrived in minutes and put out the fire. That was over a year ago. Today Michael's mother sits in her living room where there is no trace of the fire, except for the missing photos and the almost new sofa. It has been a long year for Michael and his family, but Michael's mother is finally starting to feel like things are getting under control.

When the fire department arrived at Michael's apartment, it found the living room sofa and carpet on fire and the apartment filled with smoke. The fire was put out quickly, but the contents of the living room were destroyed and there was smoke and water damage throughout the apartment. The smoke alarm did not sound, as there were no batteries in it.

The firefighters on the scene spoke with the family immediately about what happened. Michael said he was on the sofa watching TV when the lampshade started on fire. He denied he had started the fire, even though the firefighters told him that fires do not usually start in the way he described. Michael's mother told firefighters that she suspected he had played with her lighter in the past and that he may have started this fire accidentally. The firefighters on the scene gave Michael's mother a TAPP-C information card with a phone number to call.

Michael and his family spent weeks staying with family and friends while their apartment was repaired. Once they were back in their apartment and things settled down, Michael's mother looked at the card again but was reluctant to call the number, especially since things had just started to get back to normal. However, not too long after returning to their apartment, Michael's mother received a phone call from the fire prevention officer

(FPO) of the fire department. The firefighters on the scene had forwarded the report to the FPO for follow-up because a child was suspected to be involved.

The FPO answered questions that Michael's mother had about the TAPP-C program and encouraged her to call the number on the card. He also suggested coming to the family's home to do the TAPP-C Home Fire Safety Check, to help ensure that the family home was fire safe and that the family would know what to do in case of another fire. Michael's mother and the FPO scheduled an appointment.

Michael's mother called TAPP-C and was connected with a TAPP-C intake worker at the local children's mental health centre. The worker asked about Michael's fire history and about his more general

behaviour. The intake worker suggested some strategies Michael's mother could use to help ensure that Michael did not play with a lighter again, and talked about the importance of the TAPP-C Home Fire Safety Check.

The following week, Michael and his family had the home safety check. The fire service professional spoke to Michael about the dangers of playing with fire materials and enlisted Michael's help to check the smoke alarm and develop an escape plan. The fire service professional suggested to Michael's mother that the family should get a second smoke alarm and showed her where to install it. He also spoke about the importance of ensuring that the smoke alarm has batteries and is working. Michael enjoyed the fire service professional's visit and looked forward to going to the local fire station for three sessions of fire safety education.

Three weeks later, a clinician from TAPP-C called to schedule the first TAPP-C appointment at the children's mental health centre. As the first appointment approached, Michael and his mother became more apprehensive about participating. Michael didn't want to go because he didn't think he was "crazy." Michael's mother was unsure about what children's

Summary of TAPP-C steps

- Identification by fire service professional
- Fire service provides TAPP-C information to family
- Fire service check-in
- Fire service home safety check
- Intake with TAPP-C mental health professional
- Fire service education on fire safety
- Mental health assessment
- Mental health intervention
- 1-month fire service booster session of fire safety education (optional)
- 1-month mental health check-in phone call
- 12-month research follow-up (with consent)

¹ Names and identifying information has been changed to protect the anonymity of those involved. Some parts have been fictionalized to provide details about the program.



A child's fascination with fire begins at an early age.



Fire-play or fire setting can be devastating. If you have concerns about your child, call TAPP-C. We're Here to Help

TAPFC

mental health professionals actually do. She was concerned they would think she was a bad mother, and that Michael would have a "record" of having mental health problems.

Michael's mother told her concerns to the fire service professional they had been seeing and he explained more about the program philosophy of aiming to understand a child's risk for continued fire involvement and working with the family to develop a plan to reduce that risk. He explained that TAPP-C emphasizes helping and focuses on family fire safety. He was able to reassure Michael's mother.

Michael and his mother had two assessment appointments with the social worker assigned to work with them. Michael and his mother were interviewed together and separately and answered many questions about Michael's fire involvement, as well as how he was doing at school, with friends, at home and in the community. Michael shared with the social worker that he and his friends had been burning small things at the park fairly frequently and had once tried to make a hairspray torch,

as they had seen older teens do. Michael said he was very curious about how different things burned and that he was always careful.

Michael's mother revealed that she sometimes had difficulty managing Michael's behaviour, especially when he got up early in the morning. As well, she told the clinician that she was having trouble keeping track of her lighter and often felt relieved when Michael went to the park to play with friends, because he could be so demanding at home. With the family's permission, information was also gathered from Michael's teacher at school. This information showed that Michael was quite far behind in school and was having some difficulties with misbehaviour.


The TAPP-C clinician then met three times with Michael and his mother. The clinician helped Michael's mother examine what stopped her from being able to keep track of her lighter and develop a plan to ensure that she did. The clinician also helped Michael's mother understand the importance of parental supervision, even when Michael was at the park, and develop a plan to begin to do that. The clinician helped Michael develop skills to recognize when he was at risk for playing with lighters, and how to stop himself. Between each session, the clinician gave Michael and his mother home practice exercises to do. Sometimes they forgot to do the practice but the clinician would insist they go back and try again.

Over time, it became apparent that some of the issues that contributed to Michael's fire involvement also led to difficulties in other aspects of his life. Michael's mother had a hard time getting him up in the morning to go to school and reported that she was not very good at getting him to do homework. Michael's mother struggled to parent two young children by herself and was not confident in her ability to set limits or discipline them appropriately. As a result of the other issues raised during the clinician's work with the family, the social worker referred Michael for a learning assessment to try to figure out how he could be best helped at school, and referred Michael's mother to a

supportive parenting program where she had an opportunity to meet with other parents and learn new ways of managing her children's behaviour.

Michael's mother and the TAPP-C social worker reconnected about a month after they finished the official TAPP-C services. At that time, things were moving along, although Michael was still having difficulty at school. The learning assessment had been scheduled but had not yet happened.

Michael graduated from the fire service component of TAPP-C and received a certificate of accomplishment from the fire chief for his hard work in the program. It was the first certificate Michael ever earned and he was very proud of it. He had not played with lighters again, although his friends had. The TAPP-C clinician asked Michael's mother to give her a call if the learning assessment did not take place, or if she could help out in any other way.

A TAPP-C researcher contacted Michael's mother 12 months after involvement with the program. Michael and his mother were happy to report that Michael had not played with lighters or any other fire materials in the past year. Michael's learning assessment showed that he had a learning disability that was interfering with his progress at school. As a result of that assessment, Michael began receiving extra help at school. Michael's mother enjoyed the parenting program she participated in, but found some of the work hard and time consuming. She still struggles with setting appropriate limits for her children, but feels more confident that she can always get extra help if she needs it. Things are finally starting to feel back under control. 

This article was submitted by: Joanna Henderson, Ph.D. and Sherri MacKay, Ph.D.

TAPP-C: The Arson Prevention Program for Children, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (affiliated with the University of Toronto)

New regime provides new opportunities

Less than a year into their new regime, the Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service is making a difference in fire prevention, fire protection and firefighter health. Located 250 kilometres northwest of Edmonton in a picturesque blend of lakes and forest, this regional fire service is meeting the needs of its more than 6,000 residents in a jurisdiction covering 1,615 hectares.

Formed in July 2002, with an amalgamation of the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River #124 and the Town of Slave Lake, the Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service model is based on a fee-for-service contract between the municipal district and the town. All mutual aid within the area comes from a regional hall, Hall #1, which provides support for the other three halls after they respond as first responders. The region runs with a duty officer on call at all times and the full-time staff during the days.

Hall #1 is home to Fire Chief Greg Gramiak and his Deputy Fire Chief Jamie Coutts as the only full-time positions, plus four part-time positions and 26 paid on-call firefighters.

Additionally, Hall #2 in Widewater has eight volunteer firefighters, Hall #3 in Smith has 14 volunteer firefighters and Hall #4 in Flatbush has 10 volunteer firefighters.

According to Gramiak the fire department believes strongly in fire and injury prevention and actively works with the community to support this belief. "We work closely with our community in providing fire and injury prevention programming throughout the region," said Gramiak. "That includes school and classroom presentations on *Learn Not to Burn, Risk Watch*, Red Cross First Aid and CPR. We also work with the local high school in its job preparation course, where we focus on confined entry space, WHMIS, transportation of dangerous goods, standard first aid and fire extinguisher training."


The belief in fire and injury prevention also applies to the Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service's members. "All our training is conducted with seven instructors in the region, but the department has always looked for creative ways to supply training to our membership. For example, our Firefighters' Society is currently fundraising to buy the province's first mobile live fire burn unit, a project that we hope to complete in 2003. As well, we're working with the Edmonton Emergency Response Department to secure some training in its new multi-million dollar training tower to give our firefighters even more hands-on training," said Gramiak.

Another important initiative that the fire service recently completed was a local pilot project on firefighter health. "With the help of Dr. Seal of Slave Lake, all of our firefighters in Hall #1 underwent medical and physical testing, including vision, hearing and medical testing. The physical part included stair climbing, running, dummy drags, hose lifts and

push ups, with times and effort noted by the project coordinators. The success of the pilot has resulted in expansion to our other regional halls to ensure that all our firefighters undergo a yearly check-up."



Members of the Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service in action

"We have been very successful in this region by working closely with our partners," said Gramiak. "We believe that good communication is the key to a healthy, well-rounded department." 

Lesser Slave Regional Fire Service at a glance

Four fire halls

Main hall located in Slave Lake, and regional halls in Widewater, Smith and Flatbush.

Personnel

2 full-time positions
4 part-time positions
26 paid on-call firefighters
32 volunteer firefighters (located among the three regional halls)

Activations

Over 400 in 2002

Apparatus

Hall #1 1 rescue/pumper midship (1998)
2 midship pumpers (1991 & 1983)
2 wildland firefighting units
2 light pick-ups
Hall #2 1 front-mount pumper (1981)
Hall #3 2 front-mount pumpers (1984)
1 1,500 gallon forestry tanker
1 wildland firefighting unit
Hall #4 1 front-mount pumper (1991)
1 1,500 gallon tanker (1992)




AFCA update

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association is busy getting ready for its 2003 conference and trade show, which takes place June 18 - 26 in Grande Prairie.

This year's conference is the 55th annual event to focus on and discuss issues of importance to fire communities across Alberta. While billed as a working conference, the conference committee has also scheduled the annual golf tournament for June 21.

A very interesting and diverse range of sessions have been scheduled—from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response to methamphetamine laboratories and an update from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Wildfire enforcement initiatives, legal liability, organizational structure and the challenge of leadership are also on the agenda. There's even a

session on using magic for fire prevention education presentations.

To round out the conference, there's a trade show and a companion program. 



For more information or to register, call (780) 532-9842, ext. 251 or go to the AFCA web site at: www.afca.ab.ca and click on AFCA 2003 Conference.

Expert advice from our two Rays

You were asking...

Q. Are persons who clean commercial cooking equipment duct and canopy systems required to be qualified under the Alberta Fire Code?

Article 6.1.1.6. of the fire code sets out the basic requirements for having qualified individuals perform maintenance work on various fire protection systems such as fire alarm systems, portable fire extinguishers and special fire suppression systems.

The present code does not specifically mention that commercial cooking equipment ductwork cleaners need to be qualified. However, when the fire code references the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards, it is implied through the standard that persons who do ductwork cleaning need to be qualified in order to inspect and clean ductwork systems.

In July 2002, Municipal Affairs and the Safety Codes Council published Fire Code STANDATA Bulletin 97 FCB 023 – Cleaning Commercial Cooking Equipment.

This bulletin describes why ductwork cleaners need to be trained and qualified. The bulletin only “recommends” that cleaners have recognized training and



Ray Cox, Edmonton and Ray Ligenza, Calgary


knowledge in cleaning procedures based on NFPA 96 “Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Equipment.”

A code change is needed in order to make it mandatory for ductwork cleaners to be qualified under the fire code in the same way that fire alarm system, portable extinguisher and special fire suppression system persons are required to be qualified. A proposed code change has been submitted to the Fire Technical Council for consideration during the next code review.

The bulletin mentions recognized training for cleaners and describes what is currently considered as acceptable training for persons in this industry. Local

authorities can check on companies that provide a cleaning service to determine if individuals are knowledgeable in cleaning practices and that they follow the procedures established in NFPA 96.

Training for cleaners may include a detailed in-shop training program, policies and procedures for the operation of a business, or training obtained from outside sources such as those listed below:

1. International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning Association
2. Pressure Washers of North America
3. Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC
4. Phil Ackland/DELCO Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning School 

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

Digest

Counter-terrorism equipment for Alberta

Through a one-time grant of up to \$450,000 from Alberta Municipal Affairs, seven major municipalities have purchased equipment that detects and protects against possible chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. Through a coordinated plan to access federal funding for the purchase of counter-terrorism equipment, Edmonton, Calgary, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat have obtained radiation monitors, biological threat assessment kits and chemical detection systems. All of the emergency equipment being purchased under the plan will stay in the seven major municipalities because they likely have the largest populations and the greatest need for it. However, the municipalities will also make the equipment available during emergencies to other communities on a regional basis. This will result in response capability with this highly specialized equipment across the entire province.

Acknowledging accolades

In its February 2003 issue of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research newsletter, mention was made of Alberta being honoured with the 2003 Risk Watch Champion Award. This is great news for the FCO because recognition like this helps spread the word about fire and injury prevention to a wider audience.



RIP cigarettes

By proposing the possibility of regulating the ignition propensity (how a cigarette burns) of cigarettes sold in Canada, Health Canada is hoping to reduce the number of fire-related deaths in this country. In a consultation paper released in December 2002, Health Canada outlined the tragedy caused by cigarette fires and sought input from Canadians. The consultation paper also put forth a proposal for preventing cigarette fires that includes the following:

- Increasing public education on the fire hazards of cigarettes
- Reducing smoking prevalence
- Setting flammability requirements for mattresses, bedding and upholstered furniture
- Reducing the ignition propensity (RIP) of cigarettes using a government-regulated standard for ignition propensity.

Battle of the badges raises fire prevention funds

Through a unique fundraising venture that included former NHL stars Dave 'Tiger' Williams, Doug Hicks and Eddie Shack, the Town of Slave Lake raised \$1,700 for the fire prevention program in area schools.

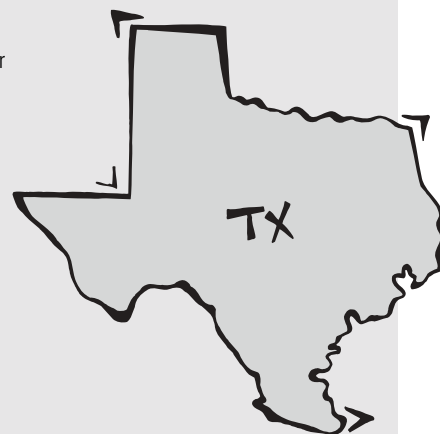
Survey says...

Thank you to everyone who responded to the *Alberta Fire News* survey last year. The results revealed some very interesting information about our readers. For example, Digest is the most popular part of the newsletter, followed by emerging issues and fire cause investigation topics. Seventy-six per cent commented positively on the variety of articles, 74 per cent on the timeliness of information and 72 per cent on the level of technical information provided. Readability and accuracy of information also ranked high, receiving 88 and 87 per cent respectively. Comments from readers were also positive, such as the following:

"I always find something of great interest in each *Fire News* as well as new ideas worth considering. I like that you put boxes at the end of some articles indicating where further info can be attained."

Taking advantage of nearby technology

Representatives from the fire departments of Edson, Yellowhead County, Grande Cache, Hinton and Jasper took advantage of the technology available through the Grande Yellowhead Regional Division's videoconferencing facility to collectively discuss making *Risk Watch* part of the standard school curriculum across Alberta. The video conferencing provides an ideal way for everyone to meet, while at the same time dramatically reducing travel costs and time as well as safety concerns of driving in winter road conditions.



Learning from Texans

Lacombe Fire Captain Bruce Keiver added to his skills portfolio by taking advantage of a unique training opportunity. In November 2002, Nova Chemicals invited Keiver to join members of its emergency response team for a trip to the industrial firefighting school at Texas A&M University, which is known worldwide for teaching the latest firefighting techniques. For five days, the group was schooled in proper methods of dealing with industrial fires, including gas and chemical infernos. One of the most fascinating aspects was the number and size of realistic training aids that the school uses.

Digest

Meth labs

There have been a number of incidents around the province where firefighters respond to a fire only to find that a meth-amphetamine laboratory or other illegal drug-production facility is on the premises. As these production or "tweaker" labs are potentially utilizing large quantities of highly toxic and flammable or explosive chemicals, it is imperative that firefighters, officers and other responding agencies become familiar with the hazards and appropriate means of dealing with them. The Fire Commissioner's Office has been staying abreast of this emerging issue for first responders and has in its lending library some information to assist in developing safe response guidelines. A video produced by the California Attorney General's Office outlining the hazards, chemicals and recommendations for protection is available on request. A handbook entitled *Drug Endangered Children* is also available. It contains a great deal of information on meth labs and the impacts on first responders as well as the children who may reside in such homes.

New videos

Live and Learn

A retiring fire inspector takes a new fire inspector on a tour of his experiences with how home fires happen. Home fire causes related to cooking, children playing with fire, smoking, space heaters, flammable liquids, candles and electricity are presented using realistic scenarios. Each fire case ends with a list of fire safety tips, and the video concludes with a discussion on the value of smoke alarms, fire escape plans, fire extinguishers and home fire inspections. This 28-minute video is a production of Fire Prevention Canada with the assistance of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

Kids Fire News TV

This 20-minute fun and fast-paced news magazine show combines music videos, humorous skits, popular music and dance to deliver important fire safety lessons to pre-teens. Kids will learn to take responsibility for their own safety, help younger kids and get involved in fire prevention at home.



Driven to Distraction

Produced by the Canada Safety Council, this 10-minute video teaches the complexities of driving, three major categories of distractions—environmental, situational and psychological—and how to handle them in a safe and responsible manner to minimize the risk of collisions and other incidents. Throughout, the importance of paying attention to the primary task of driving is emphasized.

Child Firesetting and Juvenile Arson: A Call for Community Action

This 10-minute video emphasizes the message that child and juvenile firesetting is a community problem rather than a fire department problem. Using U.S. fire loss statistics, the video demonstrates the devastating consequences of firesetting and the need to mobilize local community agencies, ranging from police, school, judicial, caregivers/parents and counsellors to address the problem in a collective manner.

Fire Smart for Babysitters

An excellent resource for babysitters and babysitter training classes, this 18-minute video covers the following aspects: the fire triangle, smoke and fire danger, causes of home fires, fire responses during emergencies and responsibilities of babysitters and parents. Footage of actual fire incidents and realistic scenarios makes this a valuable teaching resource. The video was produced by the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters Association, Saskatchewan Safety Council and the Office of the Saskatchewan Fire Commissioner.

Public Assembly Fire Safety

Fatal assembly fires that caused multiple deaths are the backdrop upon which fire safety principles and practices for these facilities are presented in this 15-minute video. The presentation focuses on code compliance, pre-fire planning and safety instructions/ideas from some major fire departments in the U.S. Occupant behaviour during assembly fire emergencies, ranging from denial, confusion and panic are discussed along with techniques of leadership and communication to lead people to safety.

Graduation—Fatally Denied: Fire Awareness for College Students

Using dramatic footage of a college resident in her room, this 15-minute video traces a fire incident and its consequences—the death of the student from fatal burn injuries and smoke inhalation. Common fire hazards in college/university residences, tampering of smoke alarms and hazardous behaviour are demonstrated by a firefighter. Also presented in the video are the major causes of fires—arson, cooking, smoking, candles, incense, halogen lamps and hazardous activities such as ceiling and wall tapestries and disabling smoke alarms. An Internet site that provides further information on this topic is: www.campus-firewatch.com

Assisted Living Facility: Emergency Plan of Action Guide

Preparing for a fire emergency in an assisted living facility is presented under three subtopics: leadership, plan of action and the RACE procedure. Under leadership, the unique characteristics of residents and how to win their cooperation in an emergency is discussed. The plan of action section presents fire exit drills, causes of fires, limitations of residents and pre-planning involvement of both staff and residents. The RACE procedure, which stands for rescue, alarm, confine and extinguish, provides a step-wise procedure in an emergency. The 12-minute video comes with a guidebook that contains additional information.



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Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office
11th Floor, Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4
Phone: (780) 427-8392
Fax: (780) 427-5898
Web site: www.gov.ab.ca/ma/fco



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Ceremony May 15

Medal recognizes Alberta Emergency Responders

The Fire Commissioner's Office received about 1,600 nominations for the first-ever Alberta Emergency Services Medals by the deadline of January 30, 2003. An initiative of Guy Boutilier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the medal honours outstanding full-time, part-time and volunteer members who have committed 12 or more years of their careers to emergency service in Alberta.

"Recent world events have moved emergency services to the forefront and these medals pay much-deserved tribute to those Albertans who serve in emergencies," said Guy Boutilier, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Nominations are being reviewed by the Alberta Emergency Services Medal Committee, chaired by the Alberta Fire Commissioner and including representatives from:

- Alberta Fire Chiefs Association
- Alberta College of Paramedics
- Emergency Management Alberta
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
- International Association of Firefighters
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
- Members at large

Medals will be awarded at a special ceremony on May 15, 2003, based on committee recommendations to the Minister.

"This medal recognizes the dedication of all emergency service personnel and shows how much Albertans appreciate their courage and compassion," said Alberta Fire Commissioner Pat Graham.

Eligible for the medal are:

- Members of Alberta's fire service
- Licensed emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians and emergency medical technologists-paramedic
- Fire service dispatchers
- Certified emergency medical dispatchers
- Search and rescue personnel
- Emergency Management Alberta personnel
- Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office personnel
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development personnel



The Alberta Emergency Services Medal is a provincial medal, and as such, is not recognized in the Canadian Order of Service and Decoration (though application has been made for recognition). As a result, protocol dictates that the Alberta medal should not be worn alongside a federal medal, though it can be worn for any occasion.

Medals will be awarded each year based on the nominations received by the annual deadline of January 30. 